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Lesley, J. P.,

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ADDRESS

TO THE

SUFFOLK NORTH ASSOCIATION

OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS.

BY J. P. LESLEY,

MINISTER OF THE FIRST EVANGELICAL CHURCH, MILTON, MS.

WITH SERMONS ON THE RULE OF FAITH, THE INSPIRATION OF THE
SCRIPTURES, AND THE CHURCH.

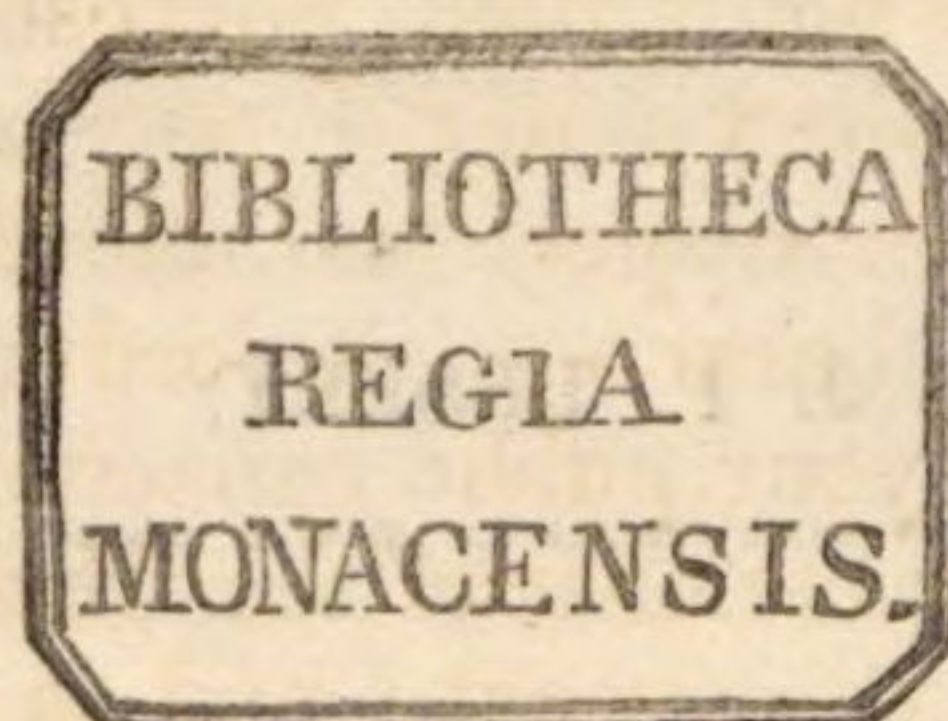
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To the Members of the

Suffolk North Association.

BRETHREN :

I address you thus collectively and publicly, because events have made it proper that my intercourse with you, as a well known public body, organized with a distinct view to public influence, should become, in its origin and its consequences, known to the public. Private persons have peculiar rights which they lay aside when they incorporate themselves for public purposes. Whatever relations of confidence and amity I may enjoy with you as individuals, whatever respect and affection I may feel for your persons and characters, according to the worth of each, you stand, in your public capacity, responsible to me and to every other member of the Christian community, for every word and every act ; and as such, I intend to hold you up to general censure for certain conduct of which I judge you guilty. And as you belong to a class in society whose personal names are professionally public, whose acts are of necessity notorious, who in many ways and for obvious reasons, as preachers, orators, lecturers, editors, teachers, and authors, court observation and seek distinction ; as you act individually to produce associate votes, and therefore justice demands an allotment of censure when you do wrong ; and as you have caused my own name to come, in more than one way, into publicity,—I may without impropriety direct attention to you by name, when a clear exposition of the grounds of censure calls for it.

The public before which I bring you and your acts by this letter, is the Christian public, and in particular those who respect and sustain the Congregational form of Church order, by whom your power as an Association, with that of

other Associations, is maintained, and your acts are indiscriminately justified. But as I not only arraign certain of your acts, but intend to denounce the whole system of undue and arbitrary clerical influence established over the Church by means of the irresistible machinery of Association, I shall cite you to answer for the unlawful employment of such machinery before the bar of the Christian public in all its parts and under every name by which it is known.

I find so little to complain of personally in your treatment of me, that I would not consider it worth noticing, did it not afford me a rare opportunity for uttering in behalf of Truth and Liberty in the Church of Christ words that have been for years shut up winged and burning in my spirit. Did I speak harshly to any, it could only be to the narrow-minded and imperious men who in such crises rule your counsels. But such men are always present in associations, like stoves in dwellings, to attract the lightning. With the feelings of the rest of you I sympathize too well, and too fully comprehend your motives to express more than sorrow that the policy of fear should bring you into such subjection to unworthy masters, dishonor you as men of God, and impair your power to set a proper example of fearless honesty before the thousand eyes that wait for it. Understand then that my purpose is not to ask redress at the hands of the Christian public for any personal wrong that you have done to me, but to pronounce your whole ecclesiastical policy a perpetual wrong to the Christian public, the continuance of the great historical wrong done to the Church of all past ages, of which I experience less than my natural share, because I live in a time when the wrong is coming to an end. That persecution for opinion sake which in former ages confronted men of thought and truth, sword in hand, threatening to take their lives if they advanced before their times, and when defied, beckoned to barbarous crowds on every side, and was, in fact, the genius of the universal world, is now little better than a joke, dependent for its point upon the most complicated machinery, and never successful where a moderate amount of *sang froid* is at hand to blunt it, and a true-hearted appeal can be made to

the growing intelligence of the age. Times are changed. It was death to Huss and Jerome to oppose the Popish clergy. It was ejection, confiscation, and imprisonment to be an English nonconformist. The boots and thumb-screws of Lauderdale and Claverhouse, were no jesting. But now, all that a heretic is called upon to suffer, is a little misrepresentation of his opinions and a little misconstruction of his motives in that great world about which he cares as little; and if the clergy pursue him through the alleys of their influence with any bitterness of tongue, a sympathy is but excited in his favor which shortly places him entirely beyond their reach. Patience and Truth will save any man from the cross now-a-days; formerly, they could but crown it with glory.

While I shall adopt, therefore, my own method of correcting common rumor where it does me the injustice to accept the report of my opinions from interested mouths, my business now with you is, not to appeal from you to the public because you refused to grant me a license to preach, but to take occasion, by a detailed account of the mode of your refusal, to denounce you to the public for laying claim to the exercise of such a right as licensing to preach. The ease with which a child of God can live in his Father's world without permission of his fellow-creatures, and preach the gospel in his Master's Church without a license from a spiritual aristocracy, has made me careless of the omission of certain canonical forms in my own case, and I cannot therefore feel indignant that you should have caused that omission. And although upon the basis of the present state of things, your refusal even to examine me as a candidate for licensure, (sitting as you did, a self-appointed court of examination, and therefore bound to examine duly every applicant, under penalty of being cashiered your office,) was a great wrong done to public justice and private rights, — yet it was too inconsiderable an injury to myself to justify a personal complaint. It was, in fact, only one of those oversights which men situated as you are frequently commit, and which have no other effect than to injure your reputation in society and impair the stability of your influence, as pru-

dent, upright, christian men and ministers, over the independent congregations whom you represent and serve. At the same time it is one of a certain class of facts which it concerns the christian public to know, and which are likely to happen more frequently hereafter than in time past ; in every one of which there lies a public wrong, struggling for utterance, but carefully hushed up among the clergy, and escaping upon the winds of rumor into circulation only through narrow and distorted crevices in the walls of their council chambers.

In publishing one such fact as a specimen of what is constantly occurring in numerous associations and presbyteries throughout the land, I shall offend you, but do the public a favor ; you must therefore forgive the offence, and henceforth amend your conduct which makes it needful. The people of the churches have no true idea of the proceedings, the language, or the policy of your private meetings. They take it for granted that ministers must always speak the truth, act from disinterested motives, understand what they are about, and do right. And although almost every congregation has occasion in the course of time to note the gross delinquencies in wisdom, modesty, and charity, of some one minister, either its own or in its neighbourhood, it is yet nevertheless commonly supposed, that when many ministers meet together, they become by some necessity, wise, modest, charitable, and just. Because this is so general a feeling, there is the more pity that it is erroneous, and the more need of correcting it by facts. The churches of New England permit their preaching servants, or ministers, to meet, nominally in public but practically in secret, and to exercise an almost absolute authority over their doctrines, their forms of worship, and their liberty of choice, because the mode by which this is accomplished is never to any extent divulged, and because of the implicit confidence reposed in their supposed immaculate probity and superiority to all temptation. Whereas, if ministers *ever* show themselves to be men, it is when they meet together in the free and easy confidence of their professional relation, unrestrained by the eye of the world, and thrown

wholly upon the resources of grace which each may happen to possess, to keep them from "foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient," from personal quarrels, and from such judicial and executive acts as must not be exposed to the light of public examination. Here, in the closed association, (open in name but into which no one intrudes who is not invited,) ministers may display unabashed the narrow spirit of a class, the chicanery of a worldly policy, the selfishness of a paid service, the fear of rivalry in knowledge or talent, some local jealousy or personal antipathy, the love of domineering over younger brethren and new comers, or any other low principle of conduct which may happen to influence them at the time. And thus shut up within four walls, those who are actuated by noble feelings and a self-forgetful, simple-hearted piety, have no more chance of making headway against the licensed violence of their fellow-members of a meaner sort than lambs caged in with leopards. This is the evil of the system; and the evil is bred of the darkness and secrecy which practically belong to it; and can only be remedied by letting in light and opening the proceedings of such bodies to public examination.

It is interesting to one who has seen, as I have had opportunities of seeing in past years, the wrongs enacted in divers presbyteries, and afterwards been subjected to the more moderate evil conduct of a New England Association, to find recorded in the Rev. W. Emerson's history of the First Church, Boston, p. 21, (from Winthrop's Journal,) a prophetic intimation of the associate system, at its very origin. This first association of New England ministers dates in the year 1633, the year of John Cotton's settlement in Boston, and is thus noticed:

"The ministers in the neighbourhood having become sufficiently numerous, formed an association, and met once a fortnight, in rotation at one another's houses. At each meeting some subject of moment was debated. Mr. Skelton and Mr. Williams of Salem were offended at the rise of this institution, and predicted that it would originate a presbytery or superintendency, that would end in the ruin of the churches' liberties." (See also Lechford.)

“The event has proved that their suspicions were groundless,” adds the historian; but he was mistaken. The seed sown in 1633 bore its expected fruit. Mr. Skelton and Mr. Williams of Salem were prophets. Other associations were formed on the model of the first, and now it is accounted a clerical misdemeanour not to be a member of one. The right to ordain their own ministers was wrested from the churches by the associated clergy, and now even a selected ordaining council is presumptive proof of heresy. At length, even permission to preach must be had of the association, instead of from the church, and a man who now preaches upon the old congregational and still older apostolic license from the church, and the church which bids him preach, are denounced and slandered wherever the irresponsible voice of the associations can penetrate. The prophecy is well fulfilled. Presbyterianism has taken the place of Puritan Congregationalism, or Independency; a spiritual superintendency has been established, and the ruin of the liberties of individual Christians is as complete as, in the nineteenth century and on Puritan ground, it can be. Young men are early inducted into the ecclesiastical politics of the association, and into the mystery of keeping their churches in order. Those who prefer the protection of liberty to the acquisition of power, are held in silence by the fear of the thousand mouths which the system can open against them at a moment’s warning. An association can unsettle almost any minister in his parish, who has not great personal courage, good temper, experience, and general information for his safeguards. Few young ministers dare to express an opinion which they have not tried on the touchstone of a vote, knowing what a slippery standing place the frozen exhalations from their association may in a few months make of their pulpit. Even the elder tremble before the potent spirit of universal tyranny which they have helped to evoke, and become as much its slaves as those to govern whom they use it. Men like the pastor of the Old South Church, Boston, Mr. Blagden, with liberal views and kindly feelings, but dependent upon their unblemished reputation for orthodoxy for the reten-

tion of the honors of a time venerable pulpit, are less free to obey their consciences and support the cause of justice, even than those who are hectored into silence by them at their secret meetings; those younger members who so often, when their elders ride them rough-shod through debates involving eternal principles and truths, mutter, "when we grow to be men, we will not thus be trampled upon." Let me warn you, my young friends, that the system under the tyranny of which you groan, will make you twenty years hence what your seniors are now. It never changes, but you do. You think yourselves strong, and only wait opportunity; but you will settle into the mould it makes for you, like Sir John Herschel's reflecting lenses, and distort the stars of truth as badly as those who were once young and true like you, do now. Your only chance is to destroy the system.

The worst aspect of the tyranny exercised by associations is this: that bad men control its exercise; and this is no accidental or occasional thing, but a necessary consequence. The principle of association being a worldly one, and its policy being worldly, worldly men are its advisers and agents. I need not remind you that if there be in a presbytery or an association a minister more unscrupulous, jesuitical, ambitious, worldly wise, "experienced," than the rest, he becomes its head; nothing can be devised without his cognizance, or completed against his will. His eye directs more or less the course of proceedings, and any determined speech which he may make, after a long debate, will determine the debate, not by convincing the opposition, but by inducing them to refuse to vote, and to maintain apparent unanimity. This fact, which all know who have been made familiar with clerical associations, becomes a momentous one, where the power of an association falls into the hands of a sincerely bad man. Then the last security is lost for the purity of motives, and for that fearless, quiet openness of proceedings which the Saviour made the law of his Church; not only have Christian rights no hearing, but Christian character is no longer safe.

Most of you will smile at the thought of being ruled by such a man as Mr. Matt. Hale Smith, whom you profess

generally to dislike, and by whom you deny that you could in any case be influenced. But deeds speak louder than words. Mr. Blagden gave me to understand that my chief business before meeting you, was to see and propitiate Mr. Smith and Mr. McClure. If *they* could be got to see things in the right light all would go well. Subsequently, Mr. Blagden, in an interview with my friend James M. Robbins of Milton, begged him to urge upon me the necessity of calling upon Mr. Matt. Hale Smith and Mr. McClure. The inference is a plain one. And deny it to yourselves or ridicule it to others as you may, it is impossible to hear periodically the language at once of bigotry and of diplomacy, from a man of acute mind, natural eloquence and unscrupulous temper, without having the christian judgment perverted and the liberty of the pure love of the Truth abridged. So long as you have such men among you, you *must* be ruled by them ; it is in the nature of things. Nor can you exclude such men, so long as your system continues to be what it is ; its vital principle a uniformity of orthodox creeds, instead of a union of christian spirits. For instead of coming together by a divine elective affinity, you are pressed together like good and bad figs in a box, by a purely human machinery.

I mention Mr. Smith's name only by way of illustration. The crying evil of presbyterial association, (whether formal or informal), is not so much that it robs the private Christian of his liberties of action and opinion, as that it vests them in bad men ; or in narrow-minded, ignorant, time-serving, fearful men ; men of no wide sympathies, no high and holy views ; whose watch-word is, *prenez garde* ; who have no faith in their own Christian stability, and less in their brethren in Christ ; who walk upon stilts for fear of imminent inundations, and lie painfully awake all night for fear of robbers ; who believe not in the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, nor dare trust the Saviour's promise, "Lo ! I am with you always, even to the end of the world ;" who see heresy in every flourish of the pen, and honour and profit to themselves in its discovery ; who love the Truth so well that they dare not refuse the call to lie for it, and with every change of faith in themselves decree

the approach of the Millennium to all mankind. To such men (and there will always be such), the machinery of the association, which good men cannot use, makes offers too tempting to be slighted. They employ it, grow powerful, then tyrannical, and finally insolent. They rule their associated clerical brethren, and these rule the brethren of the Church. They are the violoncellos to which the choirs sing; the congregations being expected to content themselves with rising as the hymn commences, and sitting down again as it concludes. This is said to be the only feasible mode of avoiding discord. The only valid objection to it seems to be that it reduces ninety-nine Christians in a hundred to puppets in a show, or mutes at a funeral.

Brethren, I trust that you appreciate my object in addressing you. It is not to complain of you as having done me personal wrong; but to indict your system as a nuisance to be abated by the grand jury of the Church. I have however only shown one of its evil phases. Before illustrating it by my personal experience at your hands, I have something else to say about it.

My not suffering from its tyranny is a mere accident; there are others who *do* suffer from it grievously. There are very few men who can come off from a conflict with a body like yours even with honor, much less with victory. The odds in your favor are tremendous. You have all the energy of professional need, all the experience of ages of precedent, all the advantage of traditional reverence. Your structure is voluntary enough to justify you in excluding whom you will; while custom has made admission to your number, a *sine qua non* in the applicant's destiny. Your meetings are secret enough to make the collection of evidence to prove your wrong doings extremely difficult; while your acts are so public and important as to ruin the reputation of the man to whom you do the wrong, for life. The religious newspapers are in your employ; they are shut to every rejoinder. For one minister to rise in behalf of Truth and Justice against an association of New England clergymen is, therefore, something like a man wrestling with a spirit of the elements. Innocence,

Honesty, Openness, Faith, Courage, they have no chance. An appeal to the public, however successful at the time, is soon forgotten ; but the offence never. The public soon ceases to sustain the appellant ; the association never forgives or forgets him. The system is hostile to the dearest liberties of man, and must come to an end. While it lasts, no voice however clear and true, no arm however brave and righteous, can be raised for more than a day within the Church. Your associations, brethren, must be stripped of their illegal powers, and reduced to their original and natural place.

When I applied to you first for a license you sat with closed doors, and rejected my application for an examination. I could but imperfectly gather an account of your proceedings, but was informed that out of compassion for me, you took that course rather than be compelled to injure my reputation by refusing me a license after a full examination. Were I to tell this insult to New Englanders do you suppose that they would suffer your association to meet again ? Yet this, with presbyteries and associations, is a common act of hypocritical tyranny, if New Englanders did but know it. Thus must a young man's reputation be blasted without the possibility of reparation or prevention, without the possibility of positively proving anything against the self constituted court, who thus tenderly ruin him, and who do it thus in order to force him afterward to a false subscription, or hang him up in terrorem before the eyes of subsequent applicants. In the plainest words the case stands thus : A number of men meet informally, at stated periods, with no fixed forms, under no constitution recognized by the courts of law ; they have no legally defined duties or rights ; they may do as they please. If a man asks them to recommend him to a certain portion of the public, they may do it or not as they like ; they may examine him or not as they like ; they may permit him to be present at their deliberation or exclude him as they like ; they may tell him the reasons of their action in his case, whatever it may be, or leave him to find them out the best way he can, just as they please ; they may receive and read to each other, if they like, slanderous

letters addressed to them individually or collectively respecting him, or canvass rumors ruinous to his character, without asking him to face the letters or to explain the rumors. He is powerless in their hands. If it were a mere *convenience* to him to be recommended, or examined, or received by them, all this might be borne as an evil incident to the structure of society and the wickedness of mankind. But these men, it must be understood, have come into possession of a power absolute over a certain portion of society, the hostile exercise of which power condemns any man against whom it is played off to the loss of his professional reputation, and the shipwreck of all his hopes. In this lies the tyranny of your system. You are an irresponsible, and yet despotic body. If you refuse to examine or recommend the man, you need give no reason for it, and yet he is ruined. You may act upon secret information wholly false, condemn him unheard, and no one can call you to account for it, — and yet he is ruined. You have the press, and the ear of the churches; he may plead in vain and struggle in vain. He is commonly poor; has toiled through seven years of college and seminary studies; is unused to manual labor; full of sanguine hopes and promises of good; inexperienced in the ways of the world; past the age of hopeful competition with young tradesmen; has been taught by these very men to despise secular pursuits; — he *must* be recommended, “licensed,” examined, and received; at all hazards, at any price. — The price is his Liberty and his Conscience. I shall say more about this hereafter.

There are, however, those in every association, as in yours, who love justice and hate policy; but they are the younger men, still sore and weak from this their theological circumcision, the sign and seal of the clerical covenant. These sometimes stand up for the rights of the helpless applicant; and sometimes conquer them. But if they cannot, then what follows? When the vote is taken, in the secret session, it is understood that the consciences of these unsuccessful champions of Truth and Liberty must offer themselves up for the reputation of the system. There must be no schism apparent to the world. The

Church must not suspect any hesitation or weakness in the despotism that rules it. No opportunity must be given to "the enemies of the cause of Christ." The votes are all cast on one side, for sake of union ; or those who dare not vote for policy against conviction must record no vote at all. No ayes and noes are called ; that would be suicidal to the system. The clerk records the vote, although six may have spoken in its favor and seven against it, as "unanimous," and then some editorial member, Mr. McClure, for example, publishes it as such in the next number of his irresponsible periodical. Thus the public, the last resort of the injured party for redress, has dust silted into its eyes, and every ray of hope is cut off. Strong must be that man's reliance upon God, profoundly rooted his principles, wholesouled his devotion to the Truth, and invincible his Christian forbearance and charity, who can pursue a quiet course after such a disastrous encounter with the hydra of clerical association, and accept his fate as "the working together of all things for his good." I should have been no better able to do this than others, but for favorable circumstances and a certain training in past years ill adapted to make me hold my convictions of the truth lightly, or to fear consequences when I can strike a blow for the liberties of my kind. I count myself fortunate in being able to make my own personal experience of an old and crying evil in the Church available in any measure for its removal. This experience I shall now give, and as the basis of what I have said.

The church at Milton which I serve in the gospel of Christ, is one of the oldest in Massachusetts, and was formerly large ; but the dissensions common to it with other churches in the times of the Unitarian controversy divided it, and caused the erection of a new building in which Dr. Gile continued to preach, and after his death, Mr. Cozzins. Other dissensions of a more private kind diminished the numbers of this orthodox part ; when invited in the summer, and again in the late autumn of 1847, to preach to it, I found it distracted by various parties and purposes, and excited against the Association

to which its late minister had and still belonged. With Mr. Cozzins' quarrels with the church, I have nothing to do.

I preached to this church from December, 1847, to April, 1848, and was then requested to become its settled minister. An ordination was considered necessary. I have been blamed by some inconsiderate friends for not now presenting the license which in 1843 I received from the Old School Presbytery of Philadelphia to some association, or for not calling a council at once to proceed to ordination. This would have been what is called good policy, but not the best; for it would have involved the necessity of sacrificing more or less Honesty at every step of the proceedings; and my theory of life is, that a christian has no need either of management or of concealment in anything. To present that license would have been an initial dishonesty, for I was no longer a Presbyterian. Reflection and converse with men, while they had left my dogmatic theology still hypercalvinistic, had changed my views upon precisely the points most insisted upon by Old School Presbyterians, the structure of the Visible Church, the necessity of creeds, and the theory of inspiration. Therefore, although I could have gone before an association for ordination, with a Presbyterian license in my hand, I considered it derogatory to the character of a christian so to do. I chose to take a step which I supposed would be a virtual restoration of the license to the Presbytery, and then to try the system of Congregationalism, with an examination *de novo*. I was given indeed to understand by my ministerial brethren beforehand, that the plainness with which I had preached my views of truth through the winter, in the Milton pulpit and elsewhere, had given offence, and would make my entrance into any Association difficult, and I myself expected that it would prove to be more than difficult; but I saw also in it at a distance the opportunity which I now embrace; I wished to study the boasted liberty of New England church government in the most practical mode; I meant to confront its policy with a transparent personal confession of faith, and see what would be the result. To the tyranny of the clerical sys-

tem I was resolved, as an independent clergyman, cost what it might, not to submit; to conceal no opinion; to ask no favors; to demand all rights; to face the fullest examination, and to avoid the common ways of expediency and policy by which the wisdom of the world has led the Church until her white garments are draggled in mire and filth, and one scarcely knows the Bride of Christ. For I did not believe in doing evil that good may come; nor in saying yes when one means no; nor in purchasing a pulpit with pangs of conscience. What I believed I was willing that all created beings shall know, as I asked of none permission to act.

I went therefore to Philadelphia and called a meeting of the Presbytery at the shortest constitutional notice. But here I was anticipated by a characteristic clerical impertinence, nevertheless quite *selon la règle*. After a motion had been made that a letter of dismissal be granted me to the Norfolk County Association, a private letter was produced, which had been circulating among the members of the Presbytery; and although most of them were my old and personal friends, and the moderator, Dr. C. C. Cuyler, was my own pastor, and I had been in frequent converse with them for days previous, I had received no advice of its existence. It was a missive from bishop Eels, a well-known pillar of orthodoxy in Newburyport, Mass. to bishop Engles, the secretary of the Presbytery and editor of the Presbyterian in Philadelphia, informing him of the heresies which I had been preaching (so he had been informed,) in Milton; begging him to warn the Presbytery to look after their licentiate; and deploring the delapidated state of orthodox theology in New England, where all the rightly righteous seemed to be defunct, and only he and one more learned brother were left alive to tell of it.

I was amused at this new evidence of the secret *entente cordiale* which I knew to exist between the distant factions of the clerical profession, as well as of the vigilance of the systematic espionage, by which its common interests are guarded. Dominicans and Jesuits of the seventeenth century grasped hands and swore fellowship whenever a Pascal or an Arnault approached, and were

at loggerheads again as soon as he passed by ; and the rival schools of theology in the nineteenth century are equally prone to forget their reciprocal recriminations, to combine to break the spirit of manly independence in any candidate before admitting him into the order of Lords over God's Heritage.

But it was in this instance as in every other a needless precaution of Policy against straightforward Duty ; for I had taken with me an imperfect but sufficiently true exposé of my theological opinions, especially upon the three points mentioned, which I had hastily sketched for any association to which I might apply for admission. And all I asked of the Presbytery was to furnish me a letter of dismissal, not as a licentiate, or as a presbyterian, but as a christian man who had been in affectionate and trusty, personal and official relations with them for years.

This creed, to call it so, I read ; and maintained its articles with what ability a sincere conviction, and years of thought, and an affectionate regard for my brethren present, and a love of the truth gave me.

Two days were spent in this manner. Then a committee of Fathers were empowered to meet me in private in the evening and endeavour to convince me of my errors and restore me to the bosom of the church. A third day of discussion followed, which few of us present will be likely to forget, at the close of which they resolved to withdraw my license. This was to be done without a word of explanation ; they did not at first perceive that the publication of such a vote was to lay my character open to the most indefinite suspicion. Against so great a tyranny and so unbrotherly an act, characteristic it must be confessed of the spirit of all ecclesiastical regencies, but nevertheless as selfish and worldly wise and heartless as any act of a railway corporation or bank direction, I made appeal to Justice and Christian Charity ; and not without success. The members of the presbytery were as good as other men, and, however blinded by the prejudices of the schools, the habits of years, and the *esprit du corps* by which their influence in society is up-

held, meant to do right. They therefore amended their resolution to read as follows :

“Whereas Mr. Peter Lesley Jun. as appears from documents read by him and now on the files of the Presbytery, and from explanations given by him, holds views in utter variance with the standards of our church, and as we believe with the word of God, therefore,

“Resolved, that the license conferred by this Presbytery on Mr. Lesley to preach the Gospel, be and it hereby is withdrawn.”

I had nothing more to ask. I had a right to ask, nay had those sentiments of just and kind fraternity of which men in the pulpit talk so earnestly, really governed them in the presbytery, they would have been the first to propose, and even more anxious than myself to bring about, that whatever they resolved, whether rightfully or wrongfully, should be so stated to the world or so placed on record, that no one should have ever suspected or been able to insinuate that I had been ejected from the communion of my christian friends for some such criminal act as embezzling funds, or committing fornication, or being seen drunk, or some other really reprehensible conduct. But no ; to think contrary to the thinkings of a set of ministers, so throws into the shade all other offences against society, all real crimes and vices, that it occurs to none, as even an act of benevolence, after fixing the stigma of Heterodoxy upon a brother, to guard him against the suspicion of Ungodliness. But I think differently ; and so do many others. Diversity of opinion we believe to be both a consequence and an evidence of Liberty of Thought. Christianity, we suppose to consist not in Faiths, but in Faith. It is therefore of as little consequence to me what my brethren of the Presbytery of Philadelphia happen to *think* about this or that article of theological doctrine, great or small, as it is to them what my opinions may be. Truth has no insurance office for the indigent and timid : we all stand alone and independent as to opinions, receiving what comes to us each one in his place and walk. But as Christians we should have

had a bond; and that, a true Christian Fellow Feeling. After getting what I required, a statement that defined sufficiently the cause of our disunion, we parted in love and with mutual good wishes. But my "pernicious and dangerous opinions" were too well founded to be shaken by the vote of a presbytery. How far they are at variance with "the standards of our church" I leave presbyterians to determine; how far they vary with the Word of God, I leave to the decision of those interested. They are rudely embodied in the paper above mentioned, reading as follows:

"Mutual sympathy in opinions and sentiments I hold to be the bond of all brotherhood, especially that of Christ's Church. Any particular church is a society of worshippers attracted together. No real association of churches can take place but among those that think and feel, in good degree, alike. External or visible union where there is no internal unity, is not only unwise; it is unnatural; that is, not according to the law of the church's life.

"I hold the ministry to be an external organ of the church corresponding to an internal intelligence, the power to teach. The church *as a whole* worships, loves, acts and teaches; therefore every member has the right, if he have the ability, to worship, love, act and teach. The ministry is therefore a divinely appointed convenience for the orderly exercise of one function of the church's organism. Laying on of hands used to be the signal for the gift of the spirit; it is now the sign of fellowship, affection and prayer.

"I hold the right of private judgment as possessed by every member of the church, in relation to the spirit and doctrine of any other such member; but also the necessity of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to render such judgment of any value, since only the spiritual can discern the spiritual. I hold the Bible to be the external, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to be the internal rule of faith, in matters of conscience; and Nature the external, and Reason the internal rule of faith, by an equally divine appointment, in matters of belief. Science and Religion are parts therefore of one whole and cannot be practically disjoined.

"I hold the words of the Lord Jesus to be of the highest authority, because the spirit was given unto him without measure; and the words of apostles and prophets to be of

authority because they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. I do not believe in any theory of inspiration known to me, because the nature of inspiration is beyond the reach of research. All Christians are inspired as Jesus Christ was, because His spirit dwells richly in them. This is the union of the head and the members. Because of this inspiration all Christians understand Christ in their souls; more or less according to the height of their inspiration. All Christians are inspired therefore as Paul and Isaiah were, therefore do they both judge and are judged by them. The Holy Ghost pervades the church and is the only theory of inspiration realized to me.

"I believe in God as one, from reason and revelation; and as three, from revelation and from his image in man.

"I believe the God of the Hebrews, Jehovah, to have been Jesus Christ, the visible manifestation of the otherwise invisible God, in various forms of nature and often and finally in the form of a man.

"I believe in the account of the creation as given in Scripture and in science thus: that as the Bible teaches motives and leaves Reason to teach acts, so the Hebrew scriptures teach only the first great cause and Geology and Astronomy its effects. I therefore hold to indefinite times, creations and progress previous to Man's appearance upon earth; that death is the effect of sin only in the case of man; that there never was a chaos; that law has always reigned; that all nature is beautiful; that the earth is cursed only as to man; that different species of the human race is a possible supposition; and a limited Noachian deluge a probable one.

"I believe in good and evil spirits, their intercourse with and influence upon human spirits and each other; according to laws dimly hinted at by the now better known phenomena of matter. I hold that man was created at first pure like God, was seduced and fell into sin and misery, and these entailed upon his descendants. I hold as theoretically faultless the exegetico-logical doctrines of Adam's federal headship according to the covenant of works; imputed guilt by virtue of the same, and original sin or natural spiritual, mental and bodily disorder as a consequence and sequel. I also consider it *natural* that like should produce like; and *just*, that evil should be the object of wrath. I consider that man's nature is good, but cannot do good, is perfect in its parts, but fallen into a disorder that finds no remedy within itself. The unregenerate are *dead*.

"I believe in the universality of sin ; there is none that doeth good, not one ; all are children of wrath. I consider the words of Christ and his apostles to express with tolerable plainness the doctrines of election, limited atonement and effectual grace, that is, God's absolute sovereignty and man's entire inability. I preach repentance and the remission of sins to all men because I am told to, not knowing to whom they are to be words of life, and reading the seal of my commission 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' I do not fear antinomianism because, 'he that is born of God cannot wilfully commit sin ;' and I do not employ methodism, 'because no man can come to Christ except the father draw him,' — and because 'men are sanctified by the *truth*.'

"I believe in justification by faith alone, because he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but that salvation begins in this life and is nothing else than the power to act and feel like God, i. e. like Christ.

"I believe in the atonement and death of Christ as the explanatory ground of justifying faith, and in the *power* of Christ to save his penitents, as the sole object of faith. I hold the Christian creed to be "I believe that thou art he that should come, the anointed son of God," and therefore find true believers among Catholics, Swedenborgians, Unitarians, Armenians, and Calvinists ; — since this faith is not revealed by flesh and blood, but by the Holy Ghost, or that personal manifestation of the power of God which we understand under that name, but of whose nature, presence and mode of action we know nothing except by the results, in a holy life and conversation.

"I believe therefore that faith without works is dead, and that heretics are blessed if they be good and orthodox condemned if bad ; that a man's opinions are important because they are motives — but that they are no true tests of regeneration.

"I believe in eternal punishment because Christ speaks of it ; in the second coming of the Lord and in the restoration of all things ; and I think it probable that a regenerated earth will be our heaven."

Of the many topics hinted at rather than opened in this paper, that of the ministry, judging by the questions which I was called upon to answer, commanded most attention ; and the opinion which seemed most distasteful, that in the words : "the ministry is therefore a divinely

appointed convenience." This expression so natural to a common-sense view of history past and present, seemed to contain an enigma, an inconceivable idea, to minds long filled with an overweening sentiment of personal dignity fostered by the superstitious homage of mankind; to men who believed themselves to compose a jure-divino order in society, superior in true worth and rank to magistrates and kings.

After these events, my connection with the Presbytery being thus ended, and every Presbyterian pulpit from Londonderry to New Orleans for ever shut against me, however many thousands of churchgoers would have gladly listened to what one thinking mind more had to say on the inexhaustible subjects of theological discussion, I returned to Milton and announced to the church the recall of my license, and the cause of it, and tendered back my call. I explained in full my view of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, of the true order of the Church, and of the nature and necessity of creeds. I told them, moreover, that I was charged with preaching Infidelity and German Rationalism and with denying the authority of the Bible.

The church, taking it for granted, that they knew after hearing me for six months, whether this charge was true or not, and that they could also judge with some correctness, the orthodoxy of my sentiments, passed a vote requesting me to continue to preach.

This vote of the church is the license under which I have continued to preach, much to the scandal of the brethren ministering to the other churches. Some of these have warned me of the consequences of my disorderly conduct. Some have threatened the church with ecclesiastical discipline by the Association of which its former ministers were members. Some, while confessing that our action was right and according to the old Congregational practice and the present Congregational theory, have urged upon me the inexpediency of opposing my single will to the settled custom of the churches, and the propriety of yielding my peculiar views in order to maintain the integrity of the clerical profession. All have

declined fellowship with me as a disorderly person, a sort of spiritual quack, whether holding heretical sentiments or not, or whatever may be the success of my practice. Not a Congregational pulpit was left open to me. My best friends dared not exchange with me, lest the flagellation which they were sure to receive should prove beyond their endurance.

All this however turned to my advantage, as it pronounced for me all the more distinctly my position, and gave me both occasion and freedom to utter what I think important truth. It confirmed the affections of friends, and excited the interest of strangers. This, persecution always does; it is its redeeming trait. I am therefore obliged, in behalf of the Truth, to every one who has spoken ill of me, and tender them my thanks.

The members of the church and parish however, unused to public scandal, as much as to clerical polemics, found themselves if any thing less able to comprehend the true nature of the charge of Heresy against me, than the meaning of the epithets Infidel, Comeouter, Radical, Disorderly, lavished upon me from abroad. The latter they ascribed to the ignorance or ill will of a few busy bodies. The former they conceived must die away at an examination. They urged me to seek a license in the usual way from some Association. I had no insurmountable objections to doing so, although I was satisfied with the church license under which I preached. I appeared therefore before you, the Suffolk North Association, in the month of June. To the Norfolk County Association, my way was barred by the feeling entertained towards it by many in the church, grounded on injuries supposed to have been received before my residence in Milton.

I stated, you will remember, at the beginning of our interview, the history of my intercourse with the Milton church and with the Presbytery of Philadelphia. I read to you the paper above recorded and submitted to a desultory cross questioning upon the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. You then requested me to withdraw, while you consulted with closed doors upon the propriety of proceeding to the examination. After dinner you requested

me to appear again, and a second discussion of the same topic, resulted in my being requested a second time to withdraw. At sunset I was informed that you had adjourned, after passing a *unanimous* vote that it was not expedient to examine the candidate. And so the matter ended.

The members of the church at Milton were outraged at this conduct, and immediately passed a resolution requesting me to continue to preach to them as before.

About this conduct, I have several things to say.

1. And first of all, I could not help feeling that the church received a just retribution, in the insult done its minister, for forsaking apostolic ground, and for countenancing a system of clerical tyranny, by surrendering their Christian and *acknowledged* rights, and by condescending to ask for a man, whom they had themselves, by the divine and natural authority vested in them as a church, commissioned to be their servant or minister in their public worship, an unnecessary and inferior license, from the hands of a body of men whose knowledge of his qualifications was much inferior to their own, and their ability to judge of them no better. I feel also that I was myself well served for deserting my principles even only in appearance, to please friends and make my path smooth; instead of accepting as it came the duty of always resisting evil and manfully professing conviction. But as always happens, I see now more clearly than then, what was proper, and came slowly to the entirely erect attitude of honest thinkers.

So greatly did the desire of yielding as far as possible to the prejudices of my friends move me, and so convinced was I that I was one at heart with those of you whom I most esteemed, that the dogmatic points were mere bagatelles which sundered us, and that in all the practical efforts for good of our profession I could work with you with honest comfort to myself and no annoyance to you, — that I repressed my sentiments of repugnance, cast as far into the background as possible my theoretical views, and met you again in December, at which time many members of the church addressed you a letter requesting

you to revise your decision of the spring, that you might proceed to a regular examination at once if you chose to grant the request of your correspondents. When after some hours debate and a vain effort of the pastor of the Old South Church to throw the responsibility and odium of again *refusing to examine a candidate* upon a neighbouring association, you hurriedly voted that it "was not expedient for the Association to revise its action" of last June, — I again felt the just punishment due to a weak defence of the Truth. I was humbled to think that I had yielded so far to solicitation as even to stand willing to accept from unlawful and unworthy hands a license which Christ had forestalled by a perpetual command, to "go and preach the gospel to every creature."

2. But to the other things. Your conduct deserves exposure and will merit condemnation at the hands of honest men on several grounds. I have already denounced the star chamber character of your meetings. At the close of our first interview I was left to guess from a vote of three lines' length, recorded as unanimous, and simply refusing me, without reasons, an examination, the mode of your proceedings. Ten months passed before an accident revealed to me the way things went in your secret session. I then learned the true meaning of the word "unanimous." There were thirteen of you present at the afternoon meeting, and after our long conversation upon the subject of Inspiration was over and I had left you to yourselves, each of you gave your opinion in turn; seven of you expressed yourselves ready to proceed to a general examination; six of you refused. As soon as this became apparent, a private letter was produced, written by Mr. Josiah Tucker, a minister out of place, residing in Milton, to one of your number, accusing me of various heresies. This letter was read and commented upon by Mr. Blagden. I was not invited to appear and meet the charges of the letter, (what more it contained which the tenderness of friends has concealed from me, I know not,) but its contents were employed to threaten or alarm and silence those of you who were disposed to do what was right, and the Resolve to decline

examining the candidate was passed, no one daring to vote against it. A private letter met me in the Presbytery also, — but *there* I was called upon to explain its appearance; with you even that form of justice was dispensed with.

At my second interview with you, in December last, Mr. Matthew Hale Smith proposed that I should again withdraw. I requested the Association to permit me to remain; and I had then the opportunity of watching the play of your interior politique.

I may as well here describe our second interview; it affords some instructive facts. I have said that it was brought about by the urgency of friends and my own isolation. The instrument of torture which the clerical system wields is nothing less than every good man's dislike to being sent to Coventry by his fellows. I had been preaching all summer; friends sometimes preached for me; but I found the brethren of the church no less desirous than some of you expressed yourselves to have an awkward difference amicably adjusted. I pledged myself in private that no needless scruples, no unchristian temper on my side should stand in the way of its composition, but that the only way left open was that of compromise, I compromising my zeal and you your policy. I had no wish for your license, for I had a better one already, and no need of your support, for I found that I could stand alone, and my belief is that no man should be in the ministry who cannot stand alone. I had frequent interviews with my friend Mr. Blagden, who gave me every assurance that my way should be made clear; I drew up at his suggestion a paper, which he held and showed to others, and which afterwards at his suggestion I modified, placing at its head a sentence which he suggested and which I could cordially subscribe. Once he gently hinted the propriety of my applying to the Norfolk County Association, but I assured him that was impossible. He gave to my friend James M. Robbins the same assurances, that he would present the matter to the Association again, and prepare the way for the usual examination. But to guide him in the difficult affair he

applied for advice first to Mr. Adams, member of one neighbouring association, and then to Dr. Storrs, a member of another. I was amused in my intercourse with him at the extreme anxiety he manifested to oil all its joints, lest the world should hear the creaking of the clerical machinery overhead, and made sometimes to feel sad that a man occupying a position of such entire independence should exhibit such feebleness in assuming with decision any course of conduct.

In the paper of which I spoke, I made my nearest approach to the language of the pulpit and the seminary. The amendment suggested by my friend Mr. Blagden, gave to the topic in dispute a more precise and orthodox aspect to suit the logical or theological taste of the greater number. Some of you to whom I submitted the paper were satisfied with it as a confession of faith. Mr. Blagden "saw no good cause why the affair should not issue to our general satisfaction;" offering himself to report statements from members of the parish to the Association which in his opinion fully justified me in having selected an association in Suffolk rather than in Norfolk County. I thought all things were well arranged. As my friends reproached me in the spring for interfering with their endeavours to set my words in a favorable light, I promised to behave better and leave the conduct of the case to them.

We met at Malden, and most of those in whose candor and intelligence I relied were absent. Neither Mr. Hitchcock of East Boston, nor Mr. Stearns of Cambridgeport, nor Mr. Albro of Cambridge, nor Mr. Furber of Newton appeared. The morning was spent in hearing and criticizing a sermon, by Mr. McClure, certain strictures upon which by a member of the Association awoke the ire and called forth vindictive insults from the reverend writer, who when rebuked for his unchristian language, by the rest, excused himself by saying "that he believed himself to have been deliberately insulted by the brother, but had held his peace because he knew that the time would come when he could have his revenge." I augured little good from such an exhi-

bition, seeing very clearly that Truth could find but small favor, where Godliness was unable to defend herself. I suspected that Orthodoxy was the only genius of the place, and my suspicion proved true.

At dinner time Mr. Blagden arrived in company with Mr. Smith, and after that the letter from the members of the Milton Church was read and thrown aside, on the ground that associations had nothing to do with churches, or church documents however drawn up, but only with ministers. Let this be noted.

I was then requested to state my purpose there. The reply from Mr. Matthew Hale Smith was : — does Mr. L. subscribe to the documents which he presented in the spring. I answered : no ; I subscribe to no opinion that I ever uttered ; not only is language imperfect, but mind is mutable ; I have no creed but of to-day. I was then called upon to read the paper to which reference has repeatedly been made ; as follows :

“I believe that the Bible, in the Hebrew and Greek original, is the only and sufficient Rule of Faith and Practice for the Christian Church.

“In employing this Rule, I believe that the Old Testament is to be interpreted by the letter and spirit of the new ; and that the New Testament is to be read aright only by those that are illuminated by the Holy Spirit ; and that we have in the recorded words of our Lord the key to the proper understanding of the whole.

“I regard the Chronology of the Hebrew scriptures as in the main correct ; but in places interpolated and conjectural, and no true guide in constructing the most ancient or primæval history ;—The LXX version, as more trustworthy than the Heb. or Sam. text, but open itself to the same exceptions.

“I regard the Bible history as a faithful record of facts relating to God’s dealings with mankind, and preserved by his providence, in singular integrity, for the use of the Church and world to all time.

“I regard the prophecies as the work of ‘holy men of old who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’

“I regard the poetry and the proverbs of the Bible as the records of inspired thoughts, so far as they agree with the words of the Son of God ; and to be recognized and received

as such by comparison with the same. [For example, David was no more inspired to *write*, when he imprecated curses, than he was to *act*, when he committed adultery; Christ forbidding both; and both being placed on record with a like design of good, and fearlessness of evil—to the pious reader. In both was he an inspired man; but by both was the imperfection or intermission of his inspiration made manifest, as happens with the words and deeds of Christians nowadays.]

“I regard the collection of the sacred scriptures as the effect of the superintending Providence of God, exercised over his people; and therefore as rightly said by the Apostle ‘to be given by inspiration of God and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, that every man of God may become perfect, thoroughly instructed unto all good works’ [the salvation of the soul, the production of personal holiness, being their end and aim.]

“Thereby was it made safe for erring men to trust in them for knowledge of heavenly things, and to this end were they made available for the most unlearned provided they be read with a pious and teachable temper. We must appeal to them in cases of doubt, and in times of trouble. Especially are we to guide our thoughts and inflame our hearts by the gospels, in the narratives of which the acts and words of Christ are set before us; while the ancient scriptures are fulfilled by his life and death, and the letters of his apostles exemplify and apply his doctrines.

“I regard ecclesiastical tradition as of use only so far as it records the humble and pious efforts of other Christians to understand the words of God.

“I judge that science, advancing every year to a more intimate and comprehensive view of God’s material universe, can never come into real and permanent conflict with his written words, but may and must assist at their exposition.

“The words of God are only hidden from the eyes that see not. If men differ in understanding the words of God, it is because they are under dominion to various forms of sin, being thus made vain in their conclusions and their foolish hearts darkened. To understand, to love and to obey the words of God—is to enter into and be of the Kingdom of heaven; and as this consists not in meat and drink, i. e. in questions of legalities and ordinances, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,—so it is especially easy for

all hearts whom God has touched, to agree upon those fundamental truths of the Bible which inspire penitence and hope and lay down principles of holy living. To agree upon the existence, justice and mercy of God; upon the coming, death and resurrection of his son Jesus Christ; upon the depravity and guilt of man; upon the need of regeneration; upon the necessity of Christian fellowship, and goodness; and upon the certainty of future punishment and reward; and in other things to agree to differ, — is the privilege of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

“I believe that the scriptures teach the unity of the one supreme God, creator of all; and that they use moreover such language in a multitude of places as cannot be satisfactorily explained except upon the hypothesis that in this unity there is mysteriously comprehended a threefold personality. That having created the world and mankind on it, and man having become alienated by wicked works and not able to remain subject to his law, by reason of a perverse spirit, God sent his eternal Son into the world, to take upon himself the nature of man and die upon the cross, the just for the unjust; making a true atonement for sin; bringing life and immortality to light through his gospel; offering eternal life to as many as come to the Father through him; dispensing the gift of the holy spirit to true believers; and promising to come again to finish and make everlasting his Kingdom.

“I believe that men are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ, as the Messiah of the old testament, (‘Him that should come,’) and the Lord of the new; — that by this faith they are united to him in personal love and a devoted obedience, by which they obtain a victory over selfish and foreign temptations, and are enabled to keep his commandments; — which faith is wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, that dwelleth in the church.

“I think that all men who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth, are members of his church and brethren one of another, and to be respected, cherished, watched over and helped forward on their way by one another; and, that ‘those that are weak in the faith are to be received, — but not to doubtful disputations.’”

Mr. Blagden immediately moved that the case be referred to the Norfolk County Association. I leave him to explain what became so suddenly of his assurances. Some

one amended with the words: "or to a council,"—which Mr. B. rejected; again it was amended with the words: "and to a council;"—this also Mr. B. rejected. Nothing was resolved upon. A call for opinions in order was made.

Mr. McClure (the reverend brother who took his revenge when the time came,) first spoke, and expressed his fear of the dangerous tendency of my opinions. (The Association had voted not to examine what my opinions were.) He insisted upon the responsibility that rested upon those who stood as sentinels of Zion, increased in times like the present, and in the vicinity of Theodore Parker. He greatly disliked "papers" that were not "clean," (the technical phrase, for certain certificates of membership, &c., which are presented at ordination.) His personal opinion of me also was highly unfavorable, considering me a person quite unsuitable to be the guide of souls. He had heard of many imprudent acts of which I had been guilty, such as leaving a venerable brother at my own church door on communion Sabbath and going to worship with Unitarians close by.

With two or three exceptions, the rest of you by turns expressed deep sympathy with the fears of the Editor of the Christian Observatory, respecting my theory (or no theory) of Inspiration, and felt convinced that Christ's sheep must be more carefully guarded than ever by their shepherds, lest in these terrible days of infidelity, they crop thistles and nightshade instead of grass, not knowing of course the difference.

Two or three of you indeed stood up for liberty of conscience and independence of conception, and expressed their belief that my bark was worse than my bite, my words than my principles. But a cry of heterodoxy being raised against them, they became suddenly mute.

Lastly Mr. Matthew Hale Smith closed in an able speech to this effect: that whether I were heretical or not in sentiment, fit or unfit in character, to be licensed, was no concern of that association. I was in a disorderly state, preaching without a license, in defiance of custom. All that the Association could do, were it to undertake to

do any thing, would be to direct me to apply to the proper authority, the Norfolk County Association ; if indeed the more urgent duty were not to refer the case to the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

The cars were now about passing: a resolution was hastily written that the Association deem it inexpedient to revise their action of last spring. Two refused to vote at all ; a third voted a negative, (in order that the public should not be a second time deceived by a "unanimous"); and we separated to our respective homes.

I must confess, brethren, that by this vote you removed a load from my spirit ; you left me finally and forever free ; you once more condemned by an illegal act your system ; and gave me a just occasion to denounce it with a clearer voice ; and you took from all persons the power of saying that I had not used all lawful and charitable means to make true principles and Custom live together, and given you the amplest opportunity to do right.

You petulantly asked me more than once, why it was that I troubled *you* ; why I did not go *elsewhere* to give trouble. Such petulance becomes laughable, when you claim, with other like bodies, to be Inquisitors General to the church of Christ. You must expect, my friends, that this official dignity shall sometimes, as in this instance, become inconvenient. Naturally you wish the honor of the office, without its fatigues, its embarrassments, odium, or naughtiness ; but this is not possible. They that illegally erect tollgates and sit by them, must reckon upon the approach of all sorts of travellers ; those who will not pay toll, among those who must. It cannot be at all times a comfortable vocation to cry: stand ! upon the highway of the King of Heaven. I was sorry for your embarrassment, but hoped that it might in the end do you good, yet I could not help smiling at your efforts to free yourselves from the "awful responsibilities," of which you commonly make so much ministerial capital, and which you protested that you did not at all wish to evade, by sending your unwelcome visitant this way and that ; now to Philadelphia, now to Randolph, in order that other reverend brethren might share in the public odium which the case

seemed to threaten and which truth would certainly demand.

I was comforted under the grave remarks upon my personal unfitness for the ministry by observing the source from which they came ; from one who had an hour or two before displayed so edifyingly the spirit and temper of the Lord Jesus, in resisting not evil, doing as he would be done by, speaking the truth in love, and thinking no evil of his brother. Certainly if an unchristian spirit is to be at any time exhibited by members or ministers of the Church of Christ, I trust it will always be by persons of narrow views and illiberal sentiment ; for then less evil will accrue. To insult one brother for writing prosy sermons, seemed therefore a proper introductory exercise to the condemnation of another for acknowledging Unitarians to be Christians when they show the temper and love of Christ.

For the satisfaction of my friends, touching the misdemeanour urged against me, I may here say, that I never preach as a minister what I will not practise as a man. I therefore exercise, on proper and convenient occasions, (once a year if possible,) the right of every Christian, to worship with the various nominally Christian sects of the day in their respective assemblies, entering as fully as I can into their feelings of worship and of duty, however deeply I may feel and openly expose what I believe to be their errors, and for the express purpose of realizing to my own soul and of testifying to others my love for *all* the brethren, and the sincerity of my conviction that the good shepherd has sheep in many other folds than that in which I feed. And of the propriety and convenience of these occasions I am the sole judge here below ; I permit no human interference with this my Christian right ; as I offer none with that of any brother. Nor have my *duties* as a minister any thing to do with this my *right* as a christian, except so far as to enable me to decide the question of propriety and convenience. I feel no greater respect for the law of puritan bigotry which condemns one to capital punishment ecclesiastically for entering a Unitarian or a Catholic place of worship (except for the

purpose of reporting holy horrors to a religious newspaper,) than for the Scottish laws of Charles and James the Second, which condemned to the gallows those that might attend a presbyterian conventicle in the country north of the Tweed.

As to the rumor, that on this particular occasion, I "insulted an aged father" by leaving him at my own church door, (I retain the form "*my church*" because it is good clerical usage,) and going into a neighbouring church, and that upon communion Sunday,—let a few words set that right. Your refusal to examine me for licensure barred my way to any customary ordination. Without clerical ordination it is the fashion to believe that bread cannot be broken and wine poured out in remembrance of the passion of our blessed Lord. Every two months therefore, as the solemn and joyous supper time drew nigh, my own mind was thrown into a ferment, and the spirits of my christian brethren filled with disgust, by the necessity of hiring, for the sum of \$10, cash in hand, value received, receipt filed, some minister in Boston, whom some Association had years before declared possessed of the truth, and some clerical council had pronounced holy for life, to do for us, as a church, what every christian has ever had the right to do for himself in the bosom of his family whenever he saw fit, and in the Church of God whenever called upon to do it by his brethren. On this particular occasion I had agreed, for the sum of ten dollars, in behalf of the church, with the reverend editor of the Boston Reporter, to come and enable us to remember the death of our gracious Lord and Saviour. I suppose that we ought to have felt deeply indebted to our reverend brother for taking compassion upon us; for had he and a few others to whom also we might have betaken ourselves in our lost estate, rejected our appeal, we know not what would have become of us. However, instead of coming himself, he saw good to send to us his venerable father-in-law, the Rev. Mr. Fisk, whose extraordinary vigor of carriage deceived me in the matter of his extreme age. To Mr. Fisk, I gave up my study; I sat among his hearers through the long morning

service ; and received from his consecrated hands the elements ; listened with patience to divers remarks from which his venerable age took off the sting ; conveyed him home ; gave him dinner and a couch ; and then, in the afternoon — preferred to worship elsewhere.

Let me correct another report which has met me, namely, that I have expressed a willingness to exchange with Unitarian, Universalist and other ministers of erroneous forms of Christian faith. I do not believe in the power of the ministry to save mankind, but in the power of the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Every preacher of the Truth should be able to follow a preacher of error, as the committee of the Scotch Church followed the noted Alexander Campbell of Va. three years ago in the trail of his Proslavery Lectures through Scotland, and be able not merely to eradicate the weeds he sows, but to sow good seed of their own in his furrows, and finally to dog him into the silence and obscurity to which Error should always be imprisoned. Few ministers perhaps can do this, but no man deserves the name of minister of Christ and preacher of the Truth who cannot.

Much more, when one man occupies one pulpit fifty Sundays in each year, and preaches to the same people ten, twenty, thirty, or fifty years, if such a man be afraid to have a Universalist, or a Unitarian, or a Catholic, or a Methodist, or a Baptist, or a Churchman, or a Mormon, or a fiend incarnate preach — yes, their best sermon — in his pulpit, he is a poltroon, and no soldier of Jesus Christ ; his bravery is all put on ; his doctrine cannot stand on its own bottom ; his faith in the power of God's truth is a wordy bubble ; *his* ministry of the word, has certainly not accomplished that whereunto God sent it.

This I say then, that I wish any people to whom I have the advantage of preaching every Sunday in the year if I choose, to hear the very best argument, and most stirring appeals which the errors that I denounce can bring to bear upon them, and if I could not arm them with a panoply to resist those arguments, or inspire them with a Truth invincible by such appeals, I should know that, like so many others, I had missed my calling. In my preach-

ing therefore I produce error in its most threatening forms to be overcome by the simple word of the Lord. And as I do not fear to do this myself, neither would I be afraid to have it done with yet greater effect by those who sincerely believe the error. *Omnipotens Dei Veritas, et prevalebit.*

But then I am ever but a minister or servant of the Church, and have no right to introduce any man as a preacher into the pulpit, whom the Church desire not to hear. Had I preached in New England at the time of the division of the churches, five and thirty years ago, I would have starved first, before I obeyed the ecclesiastical decrees of the day, when the associated clergy dared to dictate to one another with whom they should exchange. The vote of the church to which I minister is more to me, than the votes of ten thousand clerical associations, of any name.

3. Let me return to your chief offence, namely, supposing you a lawful court of examination, your refusal to examine a candidate presenting himself before you.

I reserve the question, Whence your right to examine candidates for the ministry? Who constituted you an examining board? The law of the Land? Tradition? The Churches? or Custom?—I ask you at present this question. Supposing you to have been legally and properly appointed by any of these powers, an inquisitorial council to examine all who may present themselves,—who authorized you to fail of this duty; and to refuse by a resolution now on your minutes for the month of May, 1848, to examine a candidate who appeared according to custom before you? Have you received authority from some mysterious source, not only to license or not license men who are forced to appear before you, under penalty of being denounced to the Christian world as impostors, heretics or dangerous fellows,—but also even to examine or not examine as you may take the notion? Then is your tyranny doubly odious, and New England will endure it but a little while after it is fairly exposed.

You have thrown a sacredness around your body, like a mist to hide its action; you sit with closed doors; you

receive calumnious letters and act upon them without bringing the accusers and the accused face to face; you speak in a whisper of what is past and done; you publish false reports of your doings in irresponsible periodicals, from which rejoinders are repulsed; you correspond with newspapers at a distance, when it is unsafe for you to use those on the spot, into which also true statements from the injured party or his friends are not admitted. But all this will not long avail, when the members of New England churches once come fairly to see the nature of the tyranny you exercise.

I will now examine the ground upon which you based your refusal in the second instance. You said that I did not bring with me "clean papers"; that is, that I had once been licensed by a presbytery and the license been withdrawn. Pray, my friends, what have *you* to do with Presbyteries or Presbyterial papers, whether clean, or unclean? If I, once a presbyterian, stood before a presbytery in Philadelphia, saying that I was no longer a presbyterian, and they in return said: then you are no longer a licentiate of ours, — what is that event to *you*; congregationalists of Boston? Is a Philadelphia Presbytery your supreme court, and you its circuit court, permitted to reverse none of its decisions, but obliged to accept them all as final? Are you subject to the dictation of a Presbytery, four hundred miles off? Are New England Churches to wait for some presbytery beyond the Hudson to stamp their minister with the cabalistic O. K. before they venture, not to settle him, not to license him, but even to *examine* him as to his faith? Your plea bears hypocrisy upon its face.

If not; where is your boasted puritan liberty, your superior light? What means your scorn of "Princeton theology"? One of you said that he feared my orthodoxy much more than he did my heterodoxy and you well know that five out of six of you would be rejected as candidates for licensure, as "unsound in the faith," by the very presbytery from whom you pled that I must "bring clean papers." Do you think your parishioners fools to be deceived by such lame arguments? Do you think your

clerical power can be bolstered up by deference to bigots at a distance who would shut their doors in your faces if you applied to them for admittance? Do you think that congregationalist churches will submit to such a monstrous perversion of Christian order, that makes their free selection of religious teachers null and void, unless confirmed by the endorsement of an orthodoxy five hundred miles distant, obtainable only through the mediation of a voluntary, irresponsible and non representative association of clergymen.

No, your plea was one of policy, essentially hypocritical. When it serves your turn you deny all dependence upon foreign bodies, reject their authority, and denounce their constitution. But again when it serves your turn you plead the dearest bonds of amity and confidence with men whose narrow views at other times you alternately complain of and laugh at. To maintain your own prerogatives as clergymen you claim entire independency; but to purchase power over the consciences of the laity, you will part with all your self-respect and proper liberties. So those mutual foes and persecutors, the Presbyterians and Episcopalians of Ireland, became bosom friends under James the Second, when there was danger that the Irish multitude would rise to claim their rights.

You dared to propose that I should be remanded to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, there to confess my faults and beg a new examination; which if refused, I should appeal to the Synod in due course of law; and thence, if need be, to the General Assembly; and if there pronounced a heretic, should ever after keep silence as an ecclesiastical criminal justly condemned and condignly punished. I forgot the insult, in regarding the evident imbecility and spirit of chicane thus revealed as inherent in your system. I knew that you were not commonly such slaves to the presbyteries of the Southwest, but that it was just now politic for you to appear so. Is it not daring enough to attempt to lead in your own strings the inquiring minds of New England people, always able, and fast becoming willing to decide for themselves what is truth and righteousness,—but that you

must endeavour to subject them to a presbyterial hierarchy outside of New England? Brethren, every act by which you think to attain such an end, is but a new step taken by your associate system towards its dissolution. Be careful. The Church is already in advance of its clergy, and drags them onward as a stage coach hurries down the mountain side the feeble horses that have fallen in the traces. You can no longer tell your audiences what *is* Christianity. Be content with preaching what you *think* it is.

Yes, and one of you was shameless enough to announce that complaints had been laid by the Synod of New York before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, against the churches of New England, for receiving numbers of runaway heretics; so that, as they said, New England was fast becoming the Texas of American Christianity; that an examination had been ordered, and it was found that many young men and ministers rejected by presbyteries had been received and licensed by associations; that the General Assembly had then made complaint of the wrong to the General Association of Massachusetts ministers; and that these had humbly listened to the charge, accepted the rebuke, promised reformation, and recommended to all its subassociations, to be more careful for the future, how they permit rejected presbyterians to enter as wolves in sheep's clothing, the defenceless folds of New England. Yes, said the reverend brother, this thing must be stopped, or our reputation will be gone before we know it.

With whom? — With God?

“How can ye do right who thus receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?” — John 5: 43.

I have used the word hypocrisy; but not in its worst sense. The most of you are too sincere to be capable of any but involuntary hypocrisy. I speak only of your conduct, not of your characters; of your crooked clerical policy, which warps your views of truth and turns aside your feet from the open highway; causing you to say one thing and do another; to present yourselves before your

people as Congregationalists, but to act in secret caucuses as Presbyterians; an inconsistency which, it will be to your advantage to learn, the members of Congregational churches are beginning to remark, and will in time reduce as a practical evil to the Church at large.

4. Let me now ask you the question which you will find the most difficult to answer, and under which I shall say what I have yet to say. What is your Association? What are your powers? Who made you an examining board? By what tenure do you hold the authority which in my instance and others you so tyrannically employ? Where is your charter? Let the descendants of the Puritans see it.

Your system of association is a modern invention, devised since the settlement, unknown to the Puritan Fathers, and intended to support and empower the clergy. Language is employed to make the people believe that it is for the good of the churches: reason and facts give evidence that it is for the protection of the clergy. The people little know, even now, how small a part they have in the advantages of the system. They commonly suppose that an association of ministers, means an association of churches. You encourage this belief, because it prevents investigation; but when a letter from one of the churches, or a respectable body of its members, requests some favor, to grant which would be *impolitic*, (though just,) you throw it under the table, with a: *We have nothing to do with churches*; we are a voluntary association of private, professional men, convening for mutual comfort and support. The request of the Milton church was not even filed upon your minutes.

Have you indeed nothing to do with *churches*? Then why do you interfere in them? What right have you to examine the men who are appointed by them to office? You reply: we have no right. Then why do you exercise the right? You reply: because custom has given it to us. Why then do you not reform custom? Are you not *sensores morum*, the inquisitors general of society? Why do you not preach the impropriety of churches relinquishing their just rights and transferring their own duties into your hands?

You are in fact a politico-ecclesiastical caucus, meeting periodically, six times a year, (as you have an undoubted right to do,) for grave and merry conversation, the reading and criticizing of sermons, and a pleasant dinner, but — making use of these favorable opportunities, and of the prestige of your religious office, to exercise over the consciences and liberties of the *unrepresented* churches an authority no better in its essential nature, and no higher in many of its displays, than that of the cardinal court of Rome. And custom and public opinion are your puppets, from which you accept a power in the association which you have manufactured yourselves and handed to them in the pulpit.

I wish those who shall read this address, to comprehend distinctly your offence. It is not that you are ministers ; you have a right to be what you please. It is not that you are Congregational ministers ; you have a right to choose your relations. It is not that you meet together ; all men have that right. It is not that you exclude unwelcome visitors ; what would the liberty of social life be without the black ball ? But it is, that being ministers, (servants,) you make yourselves rulers ; being Congregationalists and professing Independent principles you adopt the policy and secretly exercise the tyrannical powers of prelatists and presbyterians ; meeting to all appearance only for mutual improvement and acquaintance, you undermine character, league both for self-defence and aggressive attack, manufacture public sentiment, in favor of bigotry, and against christian freedom and the rights of your brethren ; — in a word, instead of living in and of your respective congregations, doing all the good you can in your own places, where alone you are responsible, you forsake your personal duties to attend to synodical chicane ; interfere with things and persons at a distance, of whom you have and can have no true knowledge ; pass judgment when it is not called for ; and cover the whole country with one complicated and continual intrigue, to which you affix the misnomer of the "Cause of Christ," but which in nine tenths of its relations to your words and deeds is no other than the *Inter-*

est of the Clergy. And foremost in this scheme of class organization, stands your claim to license men to preach, followed by your claim to ordain them when licensed. Certainly, if a man foolishly comes to you to be recommended to universal acceptance as a preacher, you have an undoubted right to give or withhold such recommendation. But simply, you are not acting as Christian ministers ought to act, when you exhort, entreat, persuade, threaten, and intrigue to establish among the churches the feeling that every man must apply for such a recommendation and should not be treated as a minister of any church unless he gets one. For by so doing, you are gradually and silently establishing your private and collegiate opinions and prejudices as a tyranny over the polity and free conscience of the Christian public; you are withdrawing the authority of order and discipline from its seat by Christ's appointment, namely, in the Church brotherhood, into your own care and keeping, the ministers of the Church; and you forsake thus the original puritan Independent principles which you still profess to believe scriptural and good, but — not *expedient*.

Such a tyranny established in this informal manner, and creeping like a noxious mist over society and denying its own existence whenever the hand is stretched against it to arrest it, is worse than the open, well arranged, and chartered tyranny of the Presbyterian organization; for in that, the church brotherhood *thinks* itself, at least, to be *represented*; elders, elected by the people, are made to sit with the clergy, as a check upon their ambition and narrow-mindedness. And although unfortunately the eldership is for life, and therefore becomes a mere tail to the clerical kite, which ascends by it the more steadily and soars with the greater security, yet in a presbytery the people, through the eldership, have some chance of at least knowing what goes on among their spiritual overseers, while with you, there is no witness to your acts, no report of your proceedings, no exposition of your motives. In secrecy you judge, and in secrecy you condemn; and your judgments creep up only into publicity like locusts through the sod of society, to eat bare of reputation the free and truthful characters of men.

It is surprising that in the very home of liberty, in the very churches of Boston Bay, this retrogression to the times of clerical tyranny was ever permitted ; and it can be fully accounted for only by the singular fact that the Massachusetts churches are governed by clergymen from Connecticut. Of the 16 orthodox ministers of Suffolk Co., 11* graduated at Yale College, and most of them are of Connecticut birth. The old puritan independency of Massachusetts Bay, has been the prey of the veiled presbyterianism of the New Haven and Hartford colony. The Cambridge platform has been supplanted by the Saybrook platform. The liberties of the East New England churches have been undermined by the hard dialectics and energetic policy of men educated in the school of Dwight and Taylor.

This fact contains in itself nothing reprehensible. Students of Yale College may settle in Boston ; Massachusetts churches may choose if they please Connecticut ministers ; the country is one, the church is one. But it serves to explain the modern subversion of the ancient liberties of these congregational churches. Yet not entirely. The gradual change from an Independent to a Presbyterian policy, to be understood, must be studied historically.

When New England was settled, the rights of the individual christian, the individual conscience, and the individual church, were held dearer than life, in the remembrance and face of clerical, prelatical, and synodical supervision and tyrannical interference. Each puritan Christian stood up before God to think, feel and worship by the light of his own conscience, denying every judgment of man. Each puritan congregation worshipped in a form, and professed a creed, and served itself of ministers, — chosen by itself ; and the interference of other churches *by right* was resisted in every instance ; and where it was solicited, it came not of *right*, but in modest courtesy and christian charity.

* Mr. Stone, Mr. Alvord, Dr. Beecher, Mr. Blagden, Mr. Fairchild, Mr. Oviatt, Mr. Dexter, Mr. Richards, Mr. Smith, Mr. Waterbury, Mr. Cushing.

Upon these principles was based, when the desire for an outward expression of unity among the churches was called for, the Cambridge Platform,—the first step taken by the clergy, and imprudently permitted by the churches, towards the present vicious clerical system. By this platform, clerical ordination, (clerical *licenses* were then unheard of,) i. e. ordination by the clergy, is expressly excluded from the practice of the day. (Mather's *Magnalia*, Book V. ch. ix. Of ordination and imposition of hands.)

“3. In such churches where there are Elders, imposition of hands in ordination is to be performed by those Elders.

“4. In such churches where there are no Elders, imposition of hands may be performed by some of the Brethren orderly chosen by the church thereunto. For if the people may elect officers, which is the greater, and wherein the substance of the office doth consist, they may much more, (occasion and need so requiring,) impose hands in ordination ; which is less, and but the accomplishment of the other.

“5. Nevertheless in such churches where there are no Elders and the church so desire, we see not why imposition of hands may not be performed by the Elders of other churches.”

The ministers were made by public sentiment to be satisfied with attending to their own business of preaching and parochial visitation, each in his own circle of brotherhood. Men who sat in the pews knew that they could and should decide what was the gospel of Christ and what was not, as well as the man whom they put into the pulpit. The man whom they put into the pulpit was indeed their brother in all christian rights, but their servant in all clerical duties. They took good care that his opportunities should not furnish him with a sceptre in his own church,—to say nothing of extending it over other churches. They had fought and bled in England to overthrow insolent ecclesiastics ; they were little likely to go under the yoke in their New England. Every precaution was therefore used. Not only was every ordination to the preaching office performed by the older members of the church interested, but every removal of a teacher from one church to another was accomplish-

ed by a fresh ordination by the hands of the elders of the church which he now went to serve.

“7. He that is clearly released from his office relations unto that church whereof he was a minister . . . imposition of hands also in his ordination ought to be used towards him again, for so Paul the apostle received imposition of hands twice at least from Ananias. Acts 9 : 17 and 13 : 3.”

And lest the substance of clerical domination might follow the shadow, it was even questioned that the minister of one church might administer the ordinances for another church, without a special ordination, gone into for the occasion, by that other church. (See Book V. Historical remarks, § 3.)

But, as in the early ages, those that had intellect, office and opportunity, soon wearied of the christian equality of the brotherhood, and became, priests, bishops and archbishops, with ever increasing authority over their brethren, whom at length they reduced to a state of patient and admiring submission, — this early order of the puritan churches was attacked by the restless ambition of the official class, and first of all, by new comers from England. English divines affected by a prelatical influence, such as Herle and Rutherford, argued against lay ordination, urging that the New Testament history cannot offer an instance of ordination by the hands of the people. To which the puritans replied, that all New Testament ordinations were performed, not by ordinary Pastors, but by extraordinary persons, apostles, prophets, &c.

The clerical influence however prevailed, making slow but sure headway against the feeble resistance which the second and third generations of colonists offered, whose zeal for religious liberty neither had been bred nor was nourished, like their fathers', by persecution. First of all, the principle of reordination was given up. Certain English ministers were permitted to settle in New England churches, without being reordained. This was a fatal step. It laid the central principle of church liberty in the dust, whence the clergy took good care it should never rise. There is seemingly a tone of covert exulta-

tion in the words of the venerable historian, when narrating this procedure :

“And so much Respect have our Churches had unto the Interests of the Presbytery in this Point of Ordination, that altho’ upon the translation of Pastors from one Church unto another among us, few of the Pastors thus translated, have scrupled being reordained, yet upon the arrival of some desirable Pastors formerly ordained in England, who scrupled at it, our destituted churches have gladly elected them and embraced them, and solemnizing the Transaction with Fasting and Prayer, have enjoyed them to all Evangelical Interests and Purposes, without their being reordained at all.” (Book V. p. 43, § 5.)

The Cambridge synod sat in 1649. Thirty years afterward the synod of Boston was convened, in 1690. This defined more exactly the office of the eldership, in which it decreed all authority to lie ; The preaching elder being one of the eldership. It also frowned upon lay ordination strictly so called, but went not beyond the ordination of the preaching elder by the eldership of the church to which he was to preach. (See Propositions, pp. 45, 46, 42.)

“Most unexceptionable is the Imposition of Hands, by a Presbytery ; but more exceptionable by a Fraternity. (p. 49.)

And the slow movements of the system appear in the two following expressions :

“Ministers and Messengers, of neighbouring churches, have Power to except against any Election of a Pastor, who by Errors or scandals, may be rendered unfit for the common service of the gospel.”

“The respect that churches do shew to others in the Election of a Pastor, ought so to be managed, as that they do not permit their own just Privileges to be extinguished, by anticipating Impositions upon them.” (p. 49.)

The influence of this synod was soon felt. The old notion of the sacredness of ordination, and the transmission of authority by it along a given order in the church, the notion ever so hostile to church fellowship and good order but so profitable for the clergy, was confirmed in

society. "Very Judicious men throughout the country were altogether averse to the laying on of the hands of the Fraternity, because they reckoned, that . . . by this consecration they were to be owned as admitted into the *order of Pastors*, through the whole church of God; and could not allow the rites of this *order* to be regularly and conveniently performed by any but such as were themselves of the same *order*; which persuasion has been so general, that setting aside a few *plebeian ordinations*, in the beginning of the world here among us, there has been rarely any *ordinations* managed in our churches but by the *hands* of *Presbyters*: yea any *ordinations*, but such would be but matters of Discourse and wonder."

The clergy seized upon the ceremony therefore, and speedily engrossed it. The lost sceptre was recovered.

"On the 29th of November . . . [1693] Mr. Benj. Wadsworth, who three years before had been graduated at Harvard College, was invited to the same office of assistant teacher once a month. This vote was renewed three several times and the candidate continued to preach, as an assistant the greater part of the time, until 8 September 1696, when he was inducted by the neighbouring ministers with a formality, hitherto unpractised in the land." (W. Emerson's History of the First Church in Boston, p. 145.)

It was easy now to make public opinion. Very soon "our good men were desirous to have the consent of a neighbouring presbytery unto their elections [of ministers] testified, in their ordinations, where it could be comfortably procured." This was the next step. Matters now hurried to the consummation; the system completed itself suddenly, like an icefloe when the water is chilled through to its entire depth. The licensing power passed from the churches into the hands of the clergy, and the Saybrook platform in 1708 converted the nominal Independency of the early colonists into the real presbyterianism of modern days. There, in Connecticut, the clergy became omnipotent, and have gradually reduced Massachusetts churches to the shameful subjection in which they now lie.

The Saybrook platform was drawn up by a synod composed of twelve ministers and four "messengers," or delegates, from the parishes near Hartford. It passed into a law by vote of the colonial government, the General Court at New Haven. It provided for the construction of consociations, (I. II.) and the calling of councils, (III. IV.); made the judgment of councils absolute, (V.) and disobedience punishable by excommunication. Hear its fulminations:

"VI. That if any pastor and church doth obstinately refuse a due attendance and conformity to the determination of the council, that hath the cognizance of the case and determineth it as above, after due patience used, they shall be reputed guilty of scandalous contempt, and dealt with as the rule of God's word in such case doth provide, and the sentence of noncommunion shall be declared against such pastor and church. And the churches are to approve of the said sentence, by withdrawing from the communion of the pastor and church which so refused to be healed."

An admirable fulfilment of a certain prophecy already quoted, and a fair step backward towards the Councils of Trent and Nicœa. Individual rights fared as badly as church rights, at the hands of these twelve apostles and their four angels. They went on to enact:

"XI. That if any person or persons, orderly complained of to a council, or that are witnesses to such complaints, (having regular notification to appear,) shall refuse or neglect so to do, in the place and at the time specified in the warning given, except they or he give some satisfying reason thereof to the council, they shall be judged guilty of scandalous contempt."

As for heretics, they took as good care of all such as Mother Church herself ever did. They enacted touching them:

"XII. That the said associated pastors shall take notice of any among themselves that may be accused of scandal or heresy unto or cognizable by them, examine the matter carefully, and if they find just occasion, shall direct to the calling of the council, when such offenders shall be duly proceeded against."

Nay, their fatherly care of the helpless multitudes of private christians went to the touching extreme of en-acting:

“XIV. That the associated pastors shall also be consulted by *bereaved* churches, belonging to their association, and *recommend to such churches such persons as may be fit to be called and settled in the work of the gospel ministry among them.* And if such bereaved churches shall not seasonably call and settle a minister among them, the said associated pastors shall lay the state of such bereaved church, before the General Assembly of the colony, that they may take order concerning them, as shall be found necessary for their peace and edification.”

Ecclesiastical policy could accomplish nothing more. The absolute tyranny of the clergy was fixed by these few master strokes of statesmanship, the merit of which belongs to the ministers of Connecticut, and the rewards to the churches of Massachusetts.

All this long train of usurpations beginning with the synodical legislation at Cambridge in 1649 issued from the formation of the First Association of New England organized in 1633, when, to repeat the account in its proper place,

“The ministers in the neighbourhood [of Boston] having become sufficiently numerous, formed an association and met once a fortnight at one another’s houses. At each meeting some subject of moment was debated. Mr. Skelton and Mr. Williams of Salem were offended at the rise of this institution, and predicted, that it would originate a presbytery, or superintendency, that would end in the ruin of the churches’ liberties.”

The rise of the associate system was not due to any foreign English influence, but to a proper internal and wordly necessity which lives in and acts out through every Caste or Profession *as such*. All associations are answers to calls from the weak upon the strong for protection against some common adversity. There are weak ministers as well as weak traders and weak politicians; they fear the difficulties of their position, the demands of their

duty, the pressure of lay life. Ecclesiastical association with bolder, stronger or better men multiplies their powers of resistance. Besides, when servants rebel, they must conspire ; when ministers would rule order, impose creeds, direct the course of spiritual nature, they associate. When the will of the teaching servant of the church, has forgotten its humility through the deference paid to his piety, it becomes ambitious, and chafes against barriers, and seeks "wider fields of usefulness." Unable to accomplish by the force of truth, the only weapon delivered to his hand, the victory over spiritual evils, the weak man transfers his hopes to human machinery, to words and forms. If resisted, he thinks heaven blasphemed, and cries for help to his fellow servants in other churches, who readily respond to his cry because they know not how soon they may stand in the same necessity. If the Brotherhood suspect and oppose this conspiracy, they do but tighten its sinews. Churches cannot associate. The multiplication of power is all one side. Each church struggles alone, and succumbs ; the clergy, united like one man, ride triumphant.

I have spoken of causes originating from the side of the clergy. There is another side. The feeling ever ready to spring up in the hearts of the people, and especially of the women of a parish, has been too convenient a fulcrum of power for the ministry, to be analyzed so closely as it should have been ; but History cannot be elucidated without the analysis. Truth and peace and good order and godliness in every age demand it. Here lurks the explanation of popery, prelacy and associate tyranny in all its forms. Question a New England congregation about their last ordination day, if you would comprehend how it came to pass in process of time that the third Innocent dared to make over the throne of England to Philip of France and Celestine III. to kick the crown from the head of the kneeling Henry VI. The avalanche is made up of single snow-flakes, and the thunders of Olympus were forged blow by blow and bolt by bolt in the crypt of Etna.

This is the feeling ; and all will bear me witness that it

is as natural as it is universal: "Come hear *our* minister, if you wish to hear good preaching." At this *Our* rather than at Amalfi were forged the decretals of Isidore. The power of the clergy, apart from that respect which every channel of divine truth properly receives, results more or less directly from the sentiment of personal propriety in their religious teacher which Christians insist upon cherishing. "I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, and I am of Cephas." Few are satisfied with Christ.

Members of a church are men and women of human passions. They are collectively proud of their church, their singing, their order, their minister, in the same way that they are individually proud of their houses, their horses, or their children. "Come and hear *our* minister" means at the foundation, "Come hear *my* minister. I had taste enough to like him, zeal enough to get him, and feel pride enough in exhibiting him. I do not find any beefsteaks so tender as my wife's; nor any preaching so orthodox as my minister's, anywhere; we are the people and wisdom 'll die with us."

Other feelings are mingled indeed with this; for it would be a libel upon the power of God's grace, to take for granted that human nature is not bettered where that has for generations exerted its influence. The emotion of a mother at the first college exhibition of her boy, is not entire and unmitigated selfishness springing from the fear that he may disgrace his family; so affection, friendship, gratitude, sympathy, do find room to play among the more ponderous and earthly wheels of the human heart, where the welfare, fame or safety of its spiritual teacher is supposed to be at stake. But the ground motive of church flattery, of denominational dissension, of unchristianlike subordination, is that which the world exhibits; the wish that all that belongs to us in any way shall be of first rate worth and general importance.

Ecclesiastical history has been by the operation of this natural law, but one long struggle between the divine authority of the Christian brotherhood, and the rebellious exigencies of the clerical profession. A few sections of the universal church have escaped subjugation in the

struggle. Among these is the Baptist denomination in New England. Our Baptist brethren permitted no associations among their ministers, and retain their liberties intact as in the days of Roger Williams. No license to preach is worth any thing before a Baptist church but such as the members of it themselves have granted. Nor is ordination sought by them from the clergy, but from the source of all power, the will of the Brotherhood of Christ's disciples.

5. I have said little of the essential evils of the present practice of giving out licenses from self constructed and irresponsible boards of clerical inquisition. I preferred to speak rather of the fundamental laws of christian liberty ; but as I have no intention of making myself again heard beyond the walls of the Milton Meeting House, upon a subject painful to me and to you, brethren, in every way, and upon which I find that I cannot write with proper humility and temper, I shall say this much now :

You well know that it is common for young men to leave their seminary with doubts upon this or that doctrine taught in it ; that they commonly present themselves so soon for licensure and ordination that there has been no opportunity for a knowledge of the world to call out their independence and bring them to a distinct self-definition of their personal opinions ; and that the examination to which they are subjected is a mere pantomime got up for public effect, to which all parties come with parts prepared, the young man not daring to say that his soul is his own and answering broadly Yes ! and No ! to questions of the subtlest logic and theories of the widest scope. You know by experience how awkward it would be to the profession, if candidates at examination were given to understand that entire sincerity and openness on their part was expected and would be looked upon with favor. So broken is the rule by which their theology is measured, so shackling the compasses by which their range of free thought is circumscribed for them, that those who have to employ these instruments eschew all but the roughest jobs, and frown down all criticism. The most roundabout roads are taken to reach ends. To discover

a man's *orthodoxy* he is asked "if, on entering his library, he would feel a disposition to take down the Bible before any other book and read in it." When the instruments of the Board will by no means do, the examiners apply their own private dividers and rules, no two of which agree. The confusion becomes sometimes extreme, and only subsides under the influence of some master spirit, by the application of a little bigotry on one side and a little policy on the other.

You are aware that candidates who are known to have theological difficulties are dealt with beforehand in private, in a fatherly way, and persuaded that it is not for their own good, nor for the good of the Church, nor does a good conscience demand, that they should tell all that they believe about everything; but that it would be far better to answer the questions put them *in short and general terms*, and not wake needless controversies. The great matter is to be sufficiently orthodox to save the reputation of the Examiners granting a license or proceeding to ordination, as the case may be.

You know that it often happens, as in my own case, that the person examined instead of being praised for endeavouring to state his whole faith in the plainest terms, is gently ridiculed for displaying a *morbid* conscientiousness, and if he persists in *explaining* instead of *answering*, is talked to in a higher tone; until, between a diffidence of his own powers, a modest respect for so venerable a body, and an indefinite dread of shipwreck at the beginning of his voyage, feverish with discussion and worn out with excitement, he swallows in despair the creed or the portion of it, which is thus crammed into his throat, "gives a categorical answer" to what he believes only with many limitations, and slips like an infant after hard throes into his professional life, only to wail at the moment when he first draws breath to the consciousness of the nature of the temptations to which he has sacrificed his virgin truth. Perhaps, brethren, I address those who have seen, as I have seen, a victim of this damnable system, burst into tears, after in vain offering *his explanation* of some doctrine, which his very examiners confessed was

a mystery, in humble proxy for the bold Yes ! demanded by them of him in defiance of Christ and Nature ; an explanation, (I blush to say it,) accepted by his inquisitors *in private*, but refused *in public*, lest trouble might ensue ; acknowledged to be no bar in discussion, but inadmissible in reply.

“ Do you believe these words ? ” is the question.

“ Yes, sir ; with the explanation, which I have given.”

“ That will not do ; you have given your explanation ; we understand it ; answer now categorically yes, or no ; do you believe these words ! ”

“ Yes, I do,” — and here the victim of the clerical system would fain stop, but conscience claims her rights and he must needs add — “ with the explanation which I gave before.” Then some voice oracular with pious solemnity rises on the awkward stillness which ensues :

“ Mr. Moderator, the young brother must be aware that our book that the churches that we cannot ”

Conscience and truth stop the machinery but for a moment ; the next, it moves on with a fresh impulse, and the victim is dragged helplessly through the rollers, and falls, a rail of proper shape, size and length, into his proper place, hereafter to be laid in due order upon the track of clerical usurpation to help on “ the cause of Christ.”

I need not detail these scenes, they are familiar to all ministers of presbyterian or Congregational order. But I wish the laity were as conversant with them ; — they would be astonished by new definitions of the words “ Fellowship, Orthodoxy, License,” and especially of the word Examination. And boards of examination, presbyteries and associations would be swept into oblivion before the blast of the whirlwind of an indignant public sentiment.

No tongue can tell the loathing with which a young man devoted to the truth regards the Creed which in the main he reveres, and cum animo subscribes, but which was forced upon his neck with the rude insolence of professional power and an impunity due only to an ecclesiastical prestige. Whence indeed can come the authority

by which one man obliges another to say a simple Yes, to a creed of fifty articles, only forty-nine of which he can believe, — under penalty of subjecting him to a public odium which shall take from him his profession and mark him as a heretic for life? and whence comes the tameness with which ten thousand christians submit to the nod of a hundred clergymen? It comes of the weekly ecclesiastical drill; and of the world old clerical system.

6. I have not said these things for your sake, brethren, because I know they weigh little on your minds against the profitableness and expediency of the present system and the comforts of custom. But it is time that the people know, that in deciding for them what is religion, and whom they shall select or accept as religious teachers, you are not only robbing them of their religious liberty, and arrogating to yourselves powers never bestowed by God upon any class of men in his Son's church; but, also have gone back from the views and ways of your predecessors; preferring to their purer primitive system, the depraved prelacy of the ages before the Reformation. I wish them to see that your associations, your licenses and your council ordinations are new inventions, to maintain an illgotten spiritual supremacy over the consciences of your brethren, who are too busy at their honest handicrafts to notice or understand your doings, and to whose voice, made known in single church assemblies, you as servants are bound to submit in all matters not relating to the simple preaching of the Word of the Lord, as each of you for himself understands it. And I trust in God the time is coming in which the churches to whom you minister shall tear your associations like cobwebs, and forbid henceforth the conspiracies of their teachers against the Christian commonweal. The Spirit that resides in each church, and in all churches, is competent to conduct its affairs and to determine its faith, without the dictation of your boards of examination or councils of control.

As to my own course, I desire to be ordained by the church to which I minister, and from whom alone I now consent under any circumstances to accept a license to preach, — so far as men's license may limit or supersede

that which every Christian has received from Christ himself. But I have no right to object to the church's requesting whom it pleases to be present at such ordination ; or, to its delegating whom it pleases to perform any outward sign of the ordaining act, by which it sets me as a teacher in its teaching place. And although, with Beverly and others, I consider the laying on of hands as a rite more proper for Apostolic times than for ours, and savoring nowadays of popery, I have no objection to it as a tradition and a sign of fellowship and blessing.

If now the people whose wishes, presented to you out of respect for your so called Order, you so uncereemoniously passed by, see proper *not* to ordain me in the old New England and primitive Christian way, by the hands of their own presbytery, their good and prudent elder brethren, — I shall have done my duty ; struck one blow for my Master and his Church ; and stand prepared cheerfully to lay aside my present profession of Minister of the Gospel, to become His Minister and the Church's, in some equally honest calling.

7. It only remains for me to speak of my theological views. The sermons appended to this letter are intended to correct some errors of common rumor respecting my preaching. This they will do, but nothing more. It is not important that I be understood by any but by those to whom friendship and familiarity afford sufficient means of understanding me. What I have said above, has been said not to explain myself, or define my own position, but to explain you and define yours. There are thousands of Orthodox New England Christians, and scores of young theologians, who pant for enfranchisement from clerical thralldom, and pray for the primitive liberty of the Sons of God in Christ. I have spoken as one of these ; and to these ; they understand me ; and ten years or twenty years are not too long to wait for their reply.

The freedom of individual churches from associated clerical supervision and misrule ; the freedom of individual consciences from the fear of man, from denominational bigotry, from slander, odium, persecution ; the freedom of every church officer from interference in his office du-

ties, of individual ministers from every apprehension but that of growing irresponsible to Christ; for these I speak; and in the whispering gallery of the nineteenth century I know that the lightest murmur gathers up the roar of many thunders, and a voice so weak as scarcely to be heard by its own ear, may shake ten thousand hearts with the terror of the truth.

The studies of years in the department of the Natural Sciences have made me love exactness in the expression of both Doubt and Faith; have taught me the precise value of creeds and theories, the difference between Hypothesis and Fact; and brought me to the consciousness of *progress*. This idea is at last issuing like a universal exhalation from the natural science of the day, and penetrating at every pore the theological vegetation of the schools; opening the consciousness of the younger theologians to the life which they were made to lead, a life of endless *learning*. I smile to remember the exclamations which broke from some of you, when I disclaimed allegiance to any creed but that of to-day, and refused to subscribe anew my name to any paper of opinions that I had ever written. "Here is a pretty overseer of souls!" said one. "Tomorrow he may be an infidel for all he knows," said another. "How dare we trust a man who knows not his own mind for twenty-four hours?" cried a third.

And does any one of you, *O, Veritatis filii immutabiles!* know what he shall be tomorrow? By the grace of God you are what you are, if you have either goodness or truth. Perhaps God has not taught you every thing yet; and certainly by his good grace alone can you stand in your present faith, if it be the right one.

The most zealous, if not the most presumptuous of your number, was ten years ago a Universalist preacher; can he assure me that ten years hence he shall not be a Roman Catholic? If he cannot, how is his creed stauncher than mine, supposing them to be at present the same? I lay no claim to consistency, because the very law of life is Change and Progress; and he is inconsistent from the necessity of that law, working in the marrow and

joints of his spiritual being—let him profess consistency as he please. Is *he* a fit overseer of souls? read his autobiography and see. Am I? read my sermons, examine my conversation, and see. Try all trees by their fruits. And in the end all fruits *will* be tasted.

Farewell, brethren of the Suffolk North Association. God give you light, and light to us all, and help us walk in it to the furtherance of the Gospel and the setting up of the kingdom of his dear Son. I have said but little with all these words, and some of them may pain you, and some may anger you, for which I shall be sorry. I have friends among you who will know how to take my words, when others mistake them. To the good I can do no injury; the good are always safe; there are none but chained lions in the Way of Life. To the influence of the bad I wish I could do irreparable injury. Every plant that our Heavenly Father has not planted must be rooted up, sooner or later, by agencies of his own appointment, of the number of which are we. I have said nothing new, nothing that has not been said better, a thousand times repeated, a thousand times ridiculed, rebuked, punished and put to silence, and a thousand times spoken out again. I am but one of a thousand, and speak in sympathy with thousands. If I can by the sacrifice of peace which this will cost me, nerve the heart of one young man, whom the clerical system is about to rob of Sincerity and Liberty, and to turn into an agent of tyranny, I shall be compensated.

I remain with due respect your friend and Christian brother,

J. P. LESLEY.

SERMON ON THE CHURCH.

PREACHED IN THE SPRING OF 1848, AND REWRITTEN.

Luke ix : 50. For he that is not against us, is for us. c. Mark ix : 40.

IN his whole plan of refuting the popular errors of the day, and prospectively those of every age, the Lord Jesus was eminently practical. He not only taught "with authority" and certainty, and not as a mere theologian or exegetical professor of ancient law, but was used to elicit the richest and ripest principles, the most utilitarian world truths from the every day incidents of life. He would overturn a prejudice that had stood through centuries, to the amazement of the crowds, by an appeal to some perpetually spontaneous instinct of their nature, as if he had pointed to some spot in the old blue sky and a new angel had sprung through it into view. Thus in the words of our text, he abolished *bigotry*; not by saying that it ought not to be, but by showing that it cannot be; not by a dogma, but by a fact.

The whole christian world is at present feeling after unity. An Evangelical Alliance is the idea of the day. The progress of the physical sciences has made men suspect that theological discussions may prove necessarily interminable; the opening of all other parts of the world to Saxon Christendom calls for a more practical coalition of denominational forces. All cry: let us become united!

But every thought truth has its thought shadow; and the shadow that *union* casts is *uniformity*. All who unhappily stand in it say: let us also put on a common uniform; but when it is asked: Which? each replies: Mine!

This is a mistake, a first false step. But we are trained to this mistake from childhood ; our whole physical education shackles our heart with it : we see in every thing artificial around us, from childhood up, uniformity signify unity, the external endorsing the internal. The other sons of our father's house wore the same color and pattern of clothes we did ; if there was a marked difference it was noticed and disliked ; at parades all are in scarlet or blue ; at funerals all are in black : the houses in one street are alike ; we decide upon character by unconsciously remarked resemblances between traits in the new face and in the old. The spirit of a man looks out through the eyes of his body, — therefore upon the body of his neighbour to see into and become acquainted with his spirit. Trained thus, man in this world finds it hard to dispense with uniformity as a test of unity, because here man lives by sight and not by faith, — because more subtle and spiritual tests escape us in our gross analysis of Truth.

The words of our text embody the great fact or truth intended to cure us of this mistake in matters of religion. Jesus had sent out his disciples preaching and when they returned and were gathered round him as usual, he addressed them on the subject of Humility ; assured them that they must expect no other dignity or honor to be accorded to them in this world but that of being His ministers and agents, a dignity which any child might be chosen to wear as well as they. This brought to the mind of John, that he and his companion in their late excursion had seen a person who cast out devils in the name of Jesus and yet was certainly not of the company of the seventy. They had forbidden the stranger to pursue his unlicensed calling, and he now asked the Lord Jesus if they had not done right. This meddling, prying interference with other people instead of attending to our own business and taking for granted that others are doing so too ; this accepting of universal responsibility for other men's wills and ways, when we cannot discharge that under which we lie for ourselves — is beautifully rebuked by the Saviour's reply.

No, said the Master: you did wrong to forbid him; for he that is not against us is for us.

Was any thing ever said more instantaneously self-evident, more conclusively comprehensive? breaking forth from the collective experience of life like a clap of thunder from the cloudless sky; an utterance of God, unexpected, familiar, followed by a silence through creation, every one whispering to himself: It is finished!

“You did wrong to forbid him. Externally he did not follow you: but as to the inner spirit he certainly did, a sufficient proof of which you had in the mere fact of his working miracles in the same name. He acknowledged the same authority; and exercising the same power, had a similar warrant. He did not call himself by *your* name, but he called himself by *mine*. He did not perhaps desire uniformity with you, but he surely maintained unity with you. His form was different, but his spirit was the same. Therefore forbid him not; for he that is not against us, is on our side.”

Christ is one. His church is one, and its history, — unity is characteristic of both. There is one faith and one spirit working faith. For while “no man speaking by the spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed,” — no man also “can say that Jesus is the Lord — and master of mankind — but by the Holy Ghost.” And so “by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free.”

Here we find the central truth and vital principle of the Church. The Master gives the same high warrant for loving and acting and suffering to every individual member of it. Each has his personal and separate certificate of membership in a personal and proper change of heart, bringing him, as one soul apart from all the universe, into a filial relation to God; — and each has his sealed and incommunicable orders, in his own enlightened conscience and submissive will. Thus he is, and thus he acts, and no other can call him to account. “To his own master each standeth or falleth” alone. The pleasures and the duties of the many children of God, *may* possibly be the same; the paths of many *may* happen to lie coincident;

they may therefore eat together and adopt common names, appoint common leaders and hire common servants ; — but if this happen not to be the case, John, sent forth to preach and work miracles, has no right to forbid the stranger doing the same when their paths cross. For each testifies to the other that he is Christ's, by acknowledging his name and laboring in his cause, each in his own appointed way. “Forbid him not,” says the Prince of Peace to both his jealous subjects, — for “he that is not against us is for us.”

God's great plan of providence we are told is to save the world. “He will have all men saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” To effect this he established his church in the earliest days, keeping alive the life of God in many chosen hearts, and has preserved and used it ever since as his grand agent in redeeming the world. He came to seek and to save them that are lost, and “by the foolishness of preaching he saves them that believe.” The church is his agent, his machine, his army ; and He has made it available and efficient to his purpose, by giving it a variable, accommodating form. He has varied it manifold to suit the state of that upon which it was to exercise its powers. Once the Church was like the moisture of the earth, universal, unobserved, — it was another name for Family Life. Then God concentrated it, like a lake in the sunshine ; in Jerusalem He fixed his throne, and thereabouts was his name spoken. Now it is again broken up, and spreads and flies through the world like the multiform clouds, in parts with different names, condensing and dissolving, separating and rejoining, — but all owning still the same one cause, the original law and the common end.

God has expanded and contracted his church, to suit times and purposes. He has divided and united it, as a skilful general does his army, adapting it to the face of danger and the nature of the ground ; throwing out scouting parties and flanking parties, detachments to garrison, to forage, and to escort. And thus a want of uniformity lies in the purpose and is of the very essence of the Church, — just as much as is the spirit of unity. And is our

weakness for regularity and uniformity to lay force upon the All-Wise One to depart from his universal custom in other matters and construct a Church so uniform as no other created thing? Nay the Lord God loveth unity and union, but abhorreth, as all creation tells us, that uniformity which pleases us so much. It is the spirit and not the form he looks to.

Hence his church has come down through the ages as a beautiful river flows down by many beds, between green islands to the sea. Or like Arcturus or Orion when it rises, changing its glorious colors constantly, with every change of medium in the air. Now when one asks its native color, it is answered: White. But white is the mixture of all the colors.

There may well be an inordinate and unscriptural as well as unphilosophical love of union. Such must that be considered that has for ages energized the Church of Rome; and such as it appears in the High Churchism of all denominations is a chief retarding element of the religious life of the present age. It is not intended by the head of the church, as far as we know, it never was, that she should have external uniformity. His promise is that her members should all have one *spirit*; an internal unity; should *love one another*. The church is *immortal* only as to its *internal* nature; as to its external form it is destined to perish; for that form is essentially ministerial, functional, subservient to purpose; and it has no purpose other than the preaching of the word, whether among those that are saved or to those that are not.

The Church is God's great prophet upon earth; but "prophecyings shall fail." The Church was constructed for the purpose of teaching the knowledge of the Lord: but the time comes when no man shall teach his fellow saying: know the Lord; for all shall know him from the least to the greatest. The Church lives only to preach the gospel to every creature, but when this word shall have been preached for a testimony to all people, says Christ, then cometh the end,—its end; the end of the outward church; the church *in its form* ceases then to exist; its ministers gone; its orders melted away; sym-

bolts and rituals shall have vanished ; the church internal, in its purity and spiritual unity alone thereafter remains, — the Bride, the Lamb's wife, her particolored robe laid aside, and standing clad in white.

But, until she stands, on that great day clad thus in white, — she wears her parti-colored robe. Then, she will have but one attitude and one form, an attitude of peace and a form immutable, eternal. Now, her form is ever changing, whether by development, or by battle, or by conquest. She has enemies on all sides to face ; duties of various kinds to do ; innumerable emergencies and positions to which she must adapt herself. She must needs then change. To preserve herself, to extend herself, to complete herself, to reform herself, to save the world, she must needs change, and be so ever protean in external things that those who do not know and love her say that she has no living inward unity.

Blessed are they that recognize the body of their Lord, in hands and feet and side, and love it as a whole, nor are offended that it is not, like its enclosed spirit, all hands, all eyes, all feet, all ear, one fixed, invariable and useless form, as men would have it.

As the form of the church is complex so is its activity meant to be. Its mission is indeed a simple one — to introduce or to become the kingdom of God in the world ; its office is solely to preach, by argument, by sufferance and by example, the Gospel of Jesus Christ to mankind. The voice came and comes to the world : " Go unto all nations and preach the gospel to every creature." To do this work, to quicken every Christian to accomplish his individual share of it, the Holy Ghost is given, leading into and confirming in the Truth. The ordained ministry is but an accommodation of this duty and power, which belongs to all, to a few, for convenience sake. Certain are set apart from the rest as were the Apostles, to give themselves *wholly* to the ministry of the word and to prayer ; *to the going about*, crying the Truth ; warning every man and entreating every man to live a godly life and flee from the wrath to come. The first appointment of the pulpit was unquestionably to missionary purposes ;

and such it still ought to be. Its duty was and still ought to be, to preach Christ among the Gentiles, where he is not known,—not among the Christians where he is known. The ministry were the arms of the church reaching forth on all sides, like the tentacles of a polyps from the rock on which it is fixed, into the waters of the heathen world in search of food. It is common now to say that the pulpit sustains the church, instead of the church sustaining the pulpit. But were the church to cease being missionary it would (according to its original design) cease to be ministerial. The ministry ought to be necessary to the church only for foreign agencies; the church ought always to be sufficient for herself at home.

The good and evil of the ministry may be illustrated by the uses and abuse of civil armaments. While the defence and extension of a state are thought to call for armies, which when suddenly and voluntarily enrolled, act with efficiency, perform their task and are then disbanded,—standing armies are both needless and noxious, a hotbed of civil commotions and a support of tyranny. Thus in the Empire of Christ's Church, the enrolment of the clergy should be for outside action, for the extension of the church into unenlightened regions and the universal diffusion of the Truth. Had this been kept in view from the first, that rapid expansion of Christianity which characterized the Apostolic century would not have suddenly and wholly given place to the simony, tyranny and darkness of the middle ages; when the recoil of the world upon the church almost annihilated the latter; the tramp of the return of priestly armies became its death knell; the waves piled themselves over the head of the stone, that, when first cast into the waters, had driven them backward upon all sides, and the church disappeared in the mighty deep.

The Pulpit is but one form of the church's activity, an original form, and the most characteristic, but only one. I only spoke of its perversion; that those hands which were made to grasp the outward world, are groping in its own bowels, and interfering with the inner organs of life, whence their own energy arises. The advance of

civilization is mending the evils of armies; the elevation of the spiritual life of the church rectifies the perversions of the ministry. A depraved people must have a bad government; a growing, learning, repentant age will reform it; so when the church has no life it ceases to have a missionary ministry; a sick body will have feeble hands and feet. But when life returns, by revival or by persecution, the true and original activity of the church reappears; every member becomes a preacher and every clergyman is then but a general agent or more devoted missionary. Hence all persecuted and reforming (or, as they were called in most ages of ecclesiastical history, heretical) churches, have favored the simpler, more congregational or democratic forms of government and action, have been zealous and expansive, and given to missions. To study the functions of human nature we examine the young and hale; to recover the original aspect of the church of Christ, we seek for it in its periodical renewal, in young and healthy schisms, new sects, offshoots and offspring of the older churches. We find in every one intense life; activity, simple in its object, complex in its applications; proselytism, i. e., preaching the Gospel as understood, the truth as received; a going into all the world to preach to every creature. We find in every one the pulpit agency, but always with a direction outward rather than inward.

If we thus conclude that the ordinance of the ministry is not for conservation, but for edification, not for government but for growth, not for pastorship but for missions,—it becomes evident that the Church cannot by the pulpit do every thing that she has to do. There must be other modes of her activity more internal. While preaching by her ordained ministers, (alias missionaries,) to those to whom the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ has not yet arisen, whether they sit in darkness and distance more immediate or more remote, she must accomplish duties towards all men, even those advanced in Christianity; and these—not so much by the ministry of preaching as by the other ministries which are at her command.

There is therefore a natural necessity for what is called the stated ministry. But what the necessity is, being lost sight of, this ministry is open to gross abuse. Although far inferior in christian dignity to the true preaching of the gospel among the heathen, it has always arrogated superior honors, and claimed a prior necessity, instead of regarding itself as merely the gleaning rake, which is made to follow the loaded wane across the already reaped fields, or as the garrison left behind in a fortress.

Christians, however, must "not forsake the assembling of themselves together," for then the idea of the Church is lost. But worship and communion and mutual exhortation require no ordained ministry such as the propagation of Christianity among the heathen requires; yet a ministry must arise, because leaders are demanded by every crowd. Hence even among the Quakers, who repudiate the ministry, there are elders, tacitly or self appointed; and while any one christian has a right to devote himself to the study of what interests the Church, the Church has a right to appoint and support such a one, to express the results of his studies, at their periodical assemblies, and even to invest him with the exclusive right to rule the order of their proceedings, yet so as not to infringe the liberty of every man's honest conscience. To keep alive therefore among themselves the love and practice of the truth, and to be suitably instructed in all that concerns the mind and soul, the relation of the Immortal to the Universe past, present and future, the society or church of believers maintains the preacher in his place.

To encourage the exercise of more unrestrained and affectionate brotherhood among the members, and to set an example to all men to pray without ceasing, the church institutes prayermeetings and concerts for prayer.

To train up children whose parents are unfaithful to them or gone from them, the church has her sabbath schools, by which she gathers the little ones under her own wings.

Drunkards and dealers in ardent spirits, without and within her walls, defy all ordinary appeals. The Church

conceives the idea of temperance societies, and rescues, by what is really an abnormal effort, those that are ready to perish.

She enters new and sparsely settled countries, where there are few churches, and to assemble together is difficult, — and immediately invents campmeetings, where the lessons of a twelvemonth are given and received with concentrated attention, in a few days.

The same activity, imparted by an inner life and applicable to any emergency, seizes upon the necessities of those who live in secluded valleys and forests, and turns stationed pastors into itinerant preachers, and lay members into colporteurs.

Schools, colleges, seminaries are needful to provide teachers and preachers useful for the church. She has her education societies.

When after all her efforts men refuse to hear her voice from living lips, then she grasps the press and scatters her tracts like the leaves of the wood among them.

It is in vain to say that the church in any single form can do all this, to the extent it should be done, — or while standing on any single platform of polity or opinion; that any one denomination so combines the means and applications of life for the world, as to warrant it in claiming all the ground, is arrogance. Denominational differences are but aspects of the mind of the Church and forms of utterance for its feeling and life. Every generation, — all the world, is rushing to ruin; salvation is of the church; she saves, as she can find times and ways; and they are numberless. She is Methodist in the woods, Episcopal in cities, Presbyterian everywhere; she is Calvinist for grace's sake; and for action's sake Armenian.

Paul, who loved unity as well as any man when it consisted in "all having the same mind that was in Christ Jesus," made himself the mouthpiece of the church, when he said those significant words: "I become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." So does the Saviour in the Church.

Paul knew of no *jure-divino* order of clergy, whether single or triple, but that to which *every* christian must

belong, be he minister or layman, — the order of Preachers of the Word. He would hear of no sole form of common prayer but that of “making known with thanksgiving our requests unto God in the name of Jesus Christ” and by the indictment of his spirit.

Paul had no horror of invading enemy’s ground. He walked like his master through other men’s corn on the sabbath day and rubbed out their grain in his hand. For he scupled not to preach in a Jewish oratory, or by a heathen altar when it served his turn. He did not hesitate to quote a Menandrian hexameter, or a fragment of Epimenides in the very midst of an apostolic epistle or a sermon on the unity of God.

Paul knew that his master’s kingdom stood on everlasting foundations, the mercy and the truth of God, — and was filled *within* with the Shechinah of His spirit. He was not over anxious therefore to watch how his fellow workmen built its walls, knowing that they too were “taught of God ;” but rather how he himself should hew and place the few stones that fell to his own share. And it will not be amiss for us to feel like Paul. The church of Christ has many children ; they all have tasks but not the same. Let each man perform his own, and have confidence that the rest will do the same, without his supervision. Let each also lay his hand to whatever seems needful to be done from time to time, without fearing, that while so employed, he may leave the church, or the church leave him. The church is an idea, issuing from the womb of eternity ; not a corporation, chartered at the capitol of a state. The living live in it as they live in space ; not as they would in a prison. It is the sunlight of God’s love common to the Redeemed, his children, and falling upon them wherever they may be or go, and rendering them luminous to one another. Excommunication by man’s mouth is as impossible as annihilation by man’s hand. After all, christians are obliged to allow each other to cast out devils in the name of Christ. There is a common life to them, and therefore a common liberty. The church is a Living Vine with innumerable branches, putting forth tendrils, each instinct

with its own will and life, towards every roughness in the wall, and penetrating, with its myriad independent roots, at every pore, the misery and sin of Earth which are the soil it grows in. Alas! two thousand years have well nigh spent themselves upon its increase; and yet, nine tenths of all mankind of every generation have pitched their tents and lived and died beyond its shadow!

Two thousand years! — and may not one great reason be, that Christians, doing their Master's will under one commission and in one way, have so often returned, saying: Lord! we saw certain others casting out devils in thy name and we forbade them for that they followed not us; and our time has been spent rather in denying authority than in doing duty? Well may he who finds his own agents everywhere and prepares them by an especial gift of grace to each several one, and guides them severally by his providence and spirit, and allots them separate fields and provides them with separate commissions, and knows how much he has for each of them and for all of them to do, — well may he return the answer that he gave his beloved Disciple who made the same mistake: forbid them not, for these are doing my work too; be sure that all that are not against me are for me.

Our text then, brethren, condemns bigotry and jealousy within the Church of Christ: reprehends the assumption by sects of exclusive favor in the Master's sight, or exclusive authority to preach his word, before the rest; bids them love each other and respect each other, as endowed in common with heavenly gifts and inspired by the Holy Ghost. The man who reads it right sees in it the truth, that in the complex machinery of the moral world, all the wheels take in and move together. Some are ponderous, and others agile; but all are needful and mutually dependent. For one benevolent institution of the Church to look sidewise at another, — for one denomination of Christ's people to decry or despise another is a deed as contrary to *law*, as if a pinion in a clock should boast itself against the escapement, or the hands should deny the weights.

And, with another application, — the man who reads

the text aright hears, as it were, these words : Disciple, my church has many parts and members ; thou art one ; act thy part ; wait not to obtain another ; thy place is where thou standest ; do what thou findest to do and thou shalt have done what was intended thee to do. Torment not thyself with the thought that thou art set at, — or set over, other men's work. Regard thine own.

The man who hears these words attains to the blessedness of a calm diligence. He becomes a man of constant action, for the opportunities of action are alway present to him and mere presence makes them his. The responsibility of his generation does not fall upon him ; its sympathetic influence does. Ready for every movement that appears, he adds his own item of energy to its impulse with a pleasure that is born of seeing in such a movement only a new development of the involved life and complex activity of the Universal Church, of which he feels himself a part. He springs forward like a soldier in the ranks in any new direction necessary to attain an end. He questions not too narrowly concerning probabilities and particular results, but sympathizes every way with the spontaneous action of the Church for its own sake and because he is a member of it. This or that scheme may seem a little ill advised or chimerical, or committed to weaker hands than might be, — but it is nevertheless to him an act, a wish of the Church, a bolt from his own cloud ; he enjoys it and confesses it. He partakes in the freedom of the whole ; he does with the buoyant power of liberty what his hands find to do, and his charity, conscious of its rights, believes that his fellow christians do the same. He shares in the debates and rejoicings of many powerful societies ; he subscribes the lists of a hundred different beneficent schemes from year to year ; thus, influenced by all, and influencing all, he draws the curve of highest beauty in his way to heaven.

This idea of the Church's unity, this principle of actual, loving yet free association, dominant and living in the churches of the present day, may seem a modern apparition and herald of Millennium ; — it is only the latest, ripest revelation of the Lord's own idea of his church. It presupposes four things.

1. The Church's diverse memberment ;
2. its inner, proper life ;
3. its universal activity and complicated action ;
4. its ever changeful form ;

and is conditioned by that mutual confidence among the disciples of Jesus which he meant to instil by the words of our text: "For he that is not against us, is for us."

The time is coming when the fact of union, the outward realization of the principle of Christian unity, shall be as universal as a craving for it seems fast becoming. But let us not mistake the process of the consummation, the steps of this advent.

I suppose that the various parts of the Church universal will *not* come together and love each other and act as one, under the pressure (as many think) of economical motives. Selfishness, demagogueism, heroworship forbid it; the unequal distribution of wealth and civic estimation, professional jealousies, and other influences will countervail the weightiest demonstrations of prudence.

Nor can I hope that sects and church parties will come together and love each other, because they think alike. Contingencies hung upon that condition will realize no man's hopes. It lies in our nature, it reasons from the structure of the world we live in, it shines apparently from the intention and decree of the Heavenly Father, that *here* at least, we never be allowed to come to common views of truth and duty. Controversy, consultation, force, friendship, education, thought, — all militate against it. Neither ecumenical councils, nor episcopal decrees, nor creeds nor compacts nor the fire of faggots, have availed to make the fragmentary wall of the Lord's House a single solid stone. Fragmentary it remains, and probably shall remain. Perhaps its picturesqueness from the balconies of heaven is but enhanced thereby. What is more beautiful than a dry laid wall, loading the air with the perfume of the wild roses that grow in the chinks thereof!

Neither can I think that the portions of great Christendom will form one from a desire to do so, however hearty. Evangelical alliances are but the warbled lark's notes of the Church, that do not help her to mount. We hear of

diseases of the body being sometimes cured by the earnest longings of the suffering spirit within, ever brooding with mysterious healing influence upon the healthless part. But I repeat, that the lack of uniformity in the Church is no symptom of disease, but an aspect of its nature, reducing it to analogy with all other known natures in the visible universe. The very stars of heaven differ. Nor can the mere desire of realizing the absolute idea of sameness, however extensively felt, resist the ordinary forces tending in the Church to disunion and loss of uniformity.

There is left then, — there comes up to the rescue then when all small agencies retire foiled, — a great resident power in the Church, (not too well recognized,) to effect our desire. We have seen that a similar creed, a similar form of government and liturgy, a common house of worship, are not the things which the Church's nature craves. It is interior unity, the universal brotherlove, the hand in hand and heart to heart of all the world, and all the world the Church, — for which we sigh. In this as in all else we make our last appeal to the head of the Church. In all that Jesus said and did, in all that he taught his disciples to say and do, we learn, that *love to him* is to work out the *love to the brethren*. “If ye love me,” said he, “keep my commandments. And this is my new commandment unto you, that ye love one another.”

We have arrived upon firm ground in this conclusion, that all the parts and members of the Church of Christ, all christian denominations and all christian people shall come to love each other, when, and only when, they all love Christ. I do not believe that any other influence is sweet enough to antidote the sour ingredients of ignorance, tastelessness, selfishness and what not, which spoil to our lips the flavor of the very best Christian society, to say nothing of the worst; — that any other motive will prove powerful enough to enable us to love disagreeable people, or to enable them to love us who are so often and in such various ways obnoxious and disagreeable ourselves. But this influence, this motive is sufficient. If we love our Saviour with the affection which he desires and challenges, all experience goes to show that we will find it easy to love all who are in

any degree like him, — all who *love* him, however little they *resemble* him, — all who are, in the emphatic words of our text, not *against* him, but *for him*, in this world.

II. We cannot separate until we have drawn a lesson from the reverse of our text, bearing date to us, not so much in the present as in the future. “He that is not against us is for us!” Then also — *he that is not for us is — against us.*

The test that Christ gave John to try the stranger by and make it apparent that, although acting under a different commission and unknown to them, he really was their coadjutor and fellow in the gospel ministry, — availed to prove that one of their own number and a cobearer of their own vaunted commission, was by nature and by right an alien from their company, — that Judas was a devil.

While the unity of the church amid its various forms of development and modes of action, is a truth that brings peace and joy to him who believes himself participant of the Unity, by christian faith, — to him who has learned to recognize the other members of the same one body of his Lord not by the names they wear, nor by the place or time or mode of their particular service, but by the rule: They that are not against Christ are for him; they that are not opponents of his Church are parts of it, — it must inspire with sincere alarm that man, who, whether professedly in the church or out of it, can find upon reflection no basis *in his own life*, upon which this unity may realize itself to him.

Such a man is a wandering star attached to no system, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever and the awful isolation of limitless, relationless space. High, complete, complex relationships with time and matter, he may well enjoy; but where, when these are broken up, will he find everlasting ones, in heaven, to take their place? Work while it is daylight, saith the Master; the night of death cometh wherein none can work; has this man work to do for God here or hereafter?

Such an one listens while in the wide spirit of Christian brotherhood, one Christian calls over land and sea to an-

other saying: Greet the Church of God which is over there at Corinth; them that are made holy by union with Christ Jesus; called to be saints; with *all* who in *every* place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, *both theirs and ours*, — but he is not one; these are not his brethren; this is not his Lord; the greetings pass him by. Hereafter shall he wander solitary round the walls of Zion and ponder pitifully the horrors of those words: *Without*, are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh lies.

It is therefore well said that “Out of the Church is no salvation;” a saying perverted, as the expression of every fundamental truth has again and again been; so perverted to serve party purposes, spiritual tyranny, hierarchical pride and church and state policy, as sometimes to refract quite away from pious hearts the soft light of our present text: all that are not against Christ must be for him. Nevertheless it stands true, that out of the Church there is no salvation; for all that are not *for* Christ are *against* him. To be *for Christ* is to be on his side in his conflict with the world; to favor his claims; to accept his love; to take his part; to obey his commands; to recommend his teaching; to imitate his life, and if need be, his death; to identify oneself with his destiny, and of consequence, with that of those who do likewise; of his people, his Church. To be for Christ, is to be in his church, whether other men know it or not. To be out of the Church, is to be against Christ, for we can be in the Church only by virtue of our union with him. It is fearful, therefore, to be out of that inner fellowship of “the just made perfect,” out of the spiritual brotherhood of the universal Church. Positive acts are not called for to effect this exclusion; a mere negative puts out the light of that soul’s immortality. Not — if any man *hate*, but: “If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema maranatha.” It is the *not being for* Christ wherein consists the being against him.

The Church is God’s World; prospectively, [potentially,] the only world for mankind. When this house

is finished, that scaffolding which we now call the World shall be taken down. This remains; and they that are of it and in it; the rest must — what can they else? — perish. “The former things have passed away,” sing the angels.

The Church is Christ's kingdom; the *ὁ οἰκουμενός* of eternity; the only empire. All without its frontiers are nomades of the desert. In it he rules; his love is the light thereof. They who love not him, nor own his regency, are of course outlaws, exiles, aliens from this commonwealth of Israel and strangers to its covenants of promise. For by virtue of its unity the Church stands like a pyramid of Memphis, and every grain of sand in every stone of it shall abide for ever; while, driven by the blasts of life and death, the cloudy generations of all those who are not for Christ but against him and share not in this unity, sweep, from one desert, past it, to another.

It is not a theological thema, it is not a denominational speculation, it is no edict of the priesthood, it is the law of worlds, that the Church is one, and out of it is no salvation; — also, that it includes all of every sect and age and personal character and theoretical opinions, who love the Lord Christ; and that it excludes even the wise and noble, the rich and reverend, who do not.

True religion is not simply the enlightened recognition of great truths, such as of the being and goodness of God, of the immortality of the soul, of the worth of virtue to all things that intelligently exist, — nor merely a profound respect and sincere affection for all truth, as such; but it rises higher than and beyond these; it mounts by a wondrous ladder to a wondrous height; by a personal affection for the Son of God, to a personal affection for the unincarnate, absolute good — the Father God; our Father who is in Heaven. As Jesus said: “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” He dwelt on this, as I suppose, as the real centrepiece of True Religion; teaching that no man can come unto God, who does not personally and devotedly love his Son Jesus Christ. “If a man love *me*,” he said, “he will keep my

sayings, and *my Father* will then love him." But still more explicitly in the tenderness of his last converse with them before the Cross: "And I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you; (that were needless;) for the Father himself loveth you *because ye have loved me.*"

Let me conclude then with words which at least deserve a sober meditation: No man can attain to the true knowledge and rich favor of God the Father of all, who does not warmly, devotedly, personally love our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON ON THE RULE OF FAITH.

(AS PREACHED.)

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace given us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion (analogy) * of Faith." — ROMANS xii: 6.

MORNING.

IN all Bodies of Divinity, or books in which theology is taught systematically, the doctrine of the Inspiration of the Scriptures stands first, because if mankind be ignorant and need teaching, that which teaches them is the fountain head out of which flows all that they are taught. I have heretofore spoken sufficiently at large upon the various theories of Inspiration and expressed my own individual convictions upon the subject, maintaining my right as a man and a Christian, a student and a Protestant, to investigate for myself unbiassed by the names of great men of various and opposing sects, and with all the helps within my reach, — and to utter the conclusions at which for the present I have arrived, so long as I am called upon to do so. And in doing this, I have entreated you to do the same, using the reason which God has given you to argue with, and praying for that inward illumination without which your reasoning will be so cold and dark as never to lead you into heavenly truth. I have urged upon you the evident divine character of the books of the Bible, or rather the evident inspiration, in different degrees perhaps, but always far higher than your own, of the sacred writers, psalmists, prophets and

* Nach dem Verhältnisse. D. W. — Κατα την Αναλογίαν της Πιστιως.
— Secundum Analogiam fidei. Calvin.

apostles, and their holy mission unto the early Church and unto you in these later days, to lead all humble minds into God's truth, which is salvation. I have feebly referred you to your own inspiration, (if God has ever chosen you to be his sons and daughters in Christ, and given you also a measure of his Holy Spirit,) — to testify to the inspiration of those saints of old, who spoke by the same spirit that dwelleth now in you, saying unto you: "We speak unto wise men, judge ye what we say." Above all I have set before you the words of our Lord and Master, to whom the Spirit was given without measure,* "Whom God hath sent, speaking the words of God," "and the words that he speaks unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."† Prophets and apostles were furnished first for their own day, and then for after ages, with wisdom, foresight, piety and zeal, according to the various measures of the grace of God to them and to the Church. All that they wrote, is therefore profitable for various ages, states and members of the Christian Church, to teach truths forgotten, to reprove sins that have come in like a flood, to correct errors that have spread far and wide, and to instruct every one in a righteous life. Thus has it always been. All history demonstrates, that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures were meant in God's providence to spread light and love throughout the world, to convict of sin and preach redemption through the death of Christ; — in other words, were meant to be a rule of Faith and Practice; therefore must they have been given by inspiration of God; inspired men alone could have told such histories, sung such hymns, uttered such prophecies, taught such truths; histories and prophecies that *satisfy* our longing to know the beginning, the middle and the end of things; truths that sink and swim in the rollings of our immortal souls like fish cast again into their native sea; prayers and praises, such as angels could not have taught us, because angels have neither human fears nor human hopes, but on which, coming as they do from sinning, saved, inspired men, we may rise and fly in heaven where angels are.

* John iii: 34.

† John vi: 63.

But in saying and feeling all this, I have, as you know, endeavoured to place before you as the great rule of your faith, and example for your practice, the Lord of Prophets and Apostles, him whose spirit dwelt so richly in them, — your way, your truth, your life. I have said — and I say it undismayed by the clamors of the schools, that the brightness of all inspiration wanes and fades as *His* face comes out of heaven, a shining sun of Righteousness; and Paul and Peter stand with us as schoolboys in his presence. From him came all they knew. It is but his words that they repeat. All that they assert, all that they exhort, is found also in the gospels of his life, and there uttered with a majesty and a divine simplicity, such as no scribes of jew or christian humanity could ever throw around their teachings. They preached Christ as we do now out of his recorded life and his remembered sayings. The epistles are all sermons upon gospel texts, preached by inspired men. Some are theological, as for example, the epistle to the Romans, and the epistles to the Hebrews; some are hortatory, consolatory, denunciatory or prophetic; but the text is better than the sermon; the master above his servants. It is marvellous therefore and shows some strange perversity of habit in the venerated apostle of the Reformation, Calvin of Geneva, that out of more than three hundred recorded sermons which he preached, the texts of scarcely half a dozen were chosen by him from the gospels.

Now, whence came these divine utterances of eternal truth which throw their infinite arms around the believer's soul and wrap it in eternal peace? Come they out of Peter's mouth — or out of Christ's? — "It is a faithful saying and worthy of every body's acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," (1 Tim. 1: 15,) says the apostle Paul; now whence came that faithful saying to *his* soul? He spake thus, because he believed what he said; and he believed what he said, because he had received it from the Lord Jesus; and he accepted it from the Lord Jesus as a faithful saying, because he was inspired by the Holy Ghost with faith to do so. And I this day affirm the same in your hearing. "It

is a gospel, a christian saying of the truest faith, worthy of all your acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save us, sinners ;” and I say it, because I believe it ; and I believe it because I hear Jesus Christ in the gospels say it ; and I accept it as true and rest upon it because I am inspired by the same Holy Spirit to do so, for the fruits of the Spirit are *Faith*, Hope, Charity. I do not therefore go to Paul for it ; I go with Paul to his Master and mine, who said to him *and* to me, “Come unto me, ye weary and heavy laden, and find rest to your souls.” “I came not to judge, but to save the world.” And the same word of faith which Paul preached to this and that man in Rome ; saying : “that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” do I preach this day to you, my hearers, upon the same grounds, by the same spirit, and with the same right, for the Lord himself hath said, — and no apostle could tell you more — “He that believeth on me hath life, but he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Tell me not that the words of the master and of his disciple are two equal thunderings from the celestial vault ; every heart detects the difference, for one is but the low and humble echo of the other ; clear and exact, but weak and sweet as echoes always are.

The dying, who have often their sensibilities quickened, and purged from the cant and habitudes of our impure earthlife, feel this difference more than the living do. To them it is pleasant to speak of Paul and John ; but it is ineffable to think of Christ. They listen indeed when you read to them the words of the Baptist, “Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” or those of the Apostle to the Gentiles, “There is now therefore no condemnation to them that be in Christ Jesus, who live not after the flesh but after the spirit” — but never can their feet find bottom to the river of Death, until Christ himself says to them, “He that cometh unto *me*, I will in no wise cast out.” I have sought the world through for wisdom, and faith, Schleiermacher is reported

to have said on his death bed, and nothing remains to me now but *that*; “He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out”; on this my soul can stand, as on a little but unmovable rock in the middle of a stormy ocean. Thus is the dying man inspired to quote like Paul the words of the Son of God.

It is often so with the man in the vigor of his days; for as when death approaches, which indeed is but the second flight of life, life leaves the extremities of the body, and clusters about the heart; so the faiths that [by nature and education] fasten in a man upon innumerable things, let go their hold of these and cluster about Christ the heart of Truth; then comes the second life of the soul, the heavenly. Ceasing to believe in nurses’ stories first, and after that, in men’s, we come even to doubt of inspiration when it appears in men, hold with comparatively light affections Peter, James and even John; but centre all our richest, fullest confidence in, and draw the whole deposit of our hopes from the blessed gospels, where The One with the Father, our Saviour lives and speaks himself, — himself the Visible Voice, the Word made Flesh — of God.

If this be true of Faith or Christian Knowledge, it is equally true of morality or Christian practice; The apostles preach Christ; they do but repeat their master; the Twelfth of Romans is all in the Sermon on the Mount: The three epistles of the Beloved Disciple, contain nothing not contained in those two words of his Lord — “If any man love me he will keep my commandments,” and “a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.”

Do you enquire then where is the use of the Epistles? I answer by asking where is the utility of preaching? Is it not to enforce and remind the gospel to the church? The acts of the apostles being a history, the rest of the New Testament is a bound volume of sermons upon the gospels, divinely provided as standards for the future church. I say divinely provided, for the providence of the Head of the Church is seen in all its history from the beginning.

And if you ask again wherein consists the greater excellence of those first sermons over all that have been

preached and printed since, over Luther's and John Howe's and Chalmers' and Channing's, — I say not — go for your answer to the Council of Nicœa that recollected them and decreed them canonical; for their right to assert the excellence of scripture in the 4th century was no better than your own to do the same in the 19th, a right claimed and exercised by every infant Church of the first three centuries upon its own responsibility, and by Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Clemens, Eusebius and every Church father that wrote upon the canon upon *his* own responsibility — but I ask you yourselves to read them, with an humble, pious mind, inspired by the same spirit that dwelt in their authors, to compare them with their sacred text, the words of Christ recorded in the gospels, to remark their strength and accurate conciseness of expression, their elevated tone, their pure, original unction fresh from Gethsemane and Bethlehem: to look, (if in your little boat of criticism you can do nothing more,) — along the surface of the ocean of their love for their risen Lord, and of their insight into spiritual things, and of their practical zeal by which they filled the hollows of the old and shrivelled world with the roaring waters of Christianity. Yea do this yourselves — and never ask again in what the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament saints excel all sermons ever preached. They were intended to excel all human productions. Therefore did Christ breathe on the writers of them saying receive the Holy Ghost; “it is expedient that I go away, for if I go not away the comforter could not come unto you, he shall lead you into all truth and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have told you.” For this especial providential reason were they made apostles foremost in the church; for this purpose were they endowed with a double portion of their Master's spirit, that in all respects, in labors, in sufferings, in wanderings, in preaching and in writing their epistles, they might excel, precede, guide, and strengthen their innumerable brethren; that the Church might rise on them, and the prophets as on its foundation. As Christ the Shepherd, went before them his little flock, and they followed him, so should these under shepherds go before the great church of all ages

and all lands, and in Paul's words we become followers of all them as they of Christ. He brake the bread for the multitude, but the apostles distributed it. And thus in one sense came to pass the Saviour's saying: "but the servant shall be *as* his lord."

Unfortunately, after ages made "the servant greater than his Lord," as that preacher now does, who chooses all his texts from the Epistle to the Romans, because Paul taught such unflinching Calvinism — and neglects the sermon on the mount, and the conversation before the betrayal, because neither the five points nor the thirty-nine articles are there systematically drawn up all ready for subscription. Peter in the Catholic church from being Vicar of the Lord, became the Lord: and Paul has been as much misused in the Protestant church. "I preach Christ *crucified* unto you," said Paul; and so says every good preacher and every dutiful Christian, now, — *out of the gospels.*

It was not my intention in choosing this morning's text — to speak of Inspiration, but of the Rule of Faith. This was the great goal of inquiry and pillar of contention between parts of the ancient and middle church; and is now again coming up as the great question of the day. But in saying what I have, I have laid down perhaps that general principle of faith in the New Testament canon of Scripture, upon which are most conveniently reared the Protestant argument for the commonly received theory of the Rule of Faith. This I will endeavour to state this afternoon.

My dear hearers, while we thus strive after principles and clear views of truths, let us not neglect the improvement of our spiritual affections. Remember, that though wisdom is bright, it is not warm. Let us cultivate not only *correctness* of faith, but also *fullness* of faith. Let love to Christ, his apostles and all that bear his image grow daily stronger. Let us not simply wrangle wordily *about* this truth and that truth, calling this theory false, and that man foolish, but in the peaceable and godly *love* of the truth, so conduct all our investigations as rather to uncover our own ignorance and sins, than those of any others, and for the sole purpose of better glorifying God.

AFTERNOON.

In all translations except that of King James, (which is in common English use,) the Greek word *analogia* in our text is translated analogy or relationship: — “let us use our gift of prophecy according to the analogy of Faith.” The apostle is giving directions how the various gifts and graces of Christians should be put to use and best exhibited in accordance with their nature and end. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace given us,” he says. Of course he is speaking of himself, the other apostles, in a word all Christians. All have gifts, and all have them in different forms, combinations and degrees of power. *All* are children, who believe; all are heirs, in this life as well as in the life to come; all have plenty — not only of temporal goods and spiritual privileges, but also of internal graces, the gifts of the Spirit, — to be thankful for. Paul was not afraid to call the Roman Christians’ attention to their holy thoughts, habits and powers, because in doing so he reminded them that they were all benefactions, gifts, undeserved mercies from God, and for God.

Brethren, it is not the sole business of Christians to hunt up their sins and mourn over them; it is also their duty to search out their holinesses, and make use of them with gratitude and hope. It is the Christian’s business to know himself wholly — both the bad and the good that is in him; that the bad may be trampled under foot, and the good lifted toward heaven, and that each knowing his own place and duty, by knowing his own character and powers, all may harmoniously help and edify each other. “I say therefore, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, (with an humble yet dignified candor,) according as God has (been pleased to) deal out to each the measure of faith; all the members of the body have not the same office; so we, being many, are members one of another, *having gifts*; and gifts differing according as God

has been differently gracious unto us." As if the Apostle meant to say: "neither think yourselves all alike, nor all equal, nor any wholly perfect, nor any wholly destitute; neither envy the personal gifts of others, nor neglect your own, but do your best to understand and employ them according to the will of God.

The first gift he mentions is prophecy. By consulting a concordance, you will see that this word, in the Old Testament* means foretelling future events, but is frequently † used by the Christian writers to express *preaching the gospel with fervor and truth*; a distinction is made by Paul, in 1 Cor. xiv: 5, between prophesying and speaking with tongues: "for," says he, "greater is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret (his unknown tongue)"; and the reason following explains the word prophecy — "that the Church may receive edifying." The distinction between prophesying in this use of the term, and preaching seems to lie in the different circumstances under which they were performed; when christians addressed the heathen, they were said to preach; "evangelize" is the word: but when they addressed each other, or the Church in session, they could not be said to "evangelize," i. e., "to tell good news," for they spoke to those who had already heard the news; they were said then to *prophecy*, i. e., to *speak by inspiration, speak from God*. Paul once speaks of a heathen poet as a prophet, (Titus i: 12,) because the heathen thought their national poets to speak by direct inspiration of the gods. But Christians could be *truly* called prophets and be said to prophecy, in as much

* But even there it frequently has the New Testament sense. See Prov. xxx: 1. "The prophecy that his mother taught him," xxxi: 1. "Aaron shall be thy prophet, Exodus vii: 1. Saul, 1 Sam. x: 5, 6.

† It has the other meaning also, as 1 Pet. i: 19, 20, 21. Rev. i: 3, 10, 11; xi: 3. 1 Pet. i: 10. Jude xiv. 1 Tim. i: 18. According to the prophecies *that went before*." Others are doubtful; e. g. 1 Cor. xii: 10. 1 Tim. iv: 14. Rev. xi: 6; xix: 10. 1 Cor. xiii: 8. Acts xxi: 9. 1 Cor. xiii: 9; xiv: 1, 39, 24, 31. Acts xix: 6. 1 Cor. xiv: 5. 1 Thess. v: 20.

But see the present text; also 1 Cor. xiv: 3. He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification. 5, "Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh." 1 Cor. xiv: 6. "Except I speak by prophesying or doctrine." 22. Titus i: 12, Paul calls a heathen poet a prophet, i. e., one inspired to speak.

as it was known that they were temples of the Holy Ghost, and the comforter was provided them to suggest thoughts and words in times of need. At times in public assemblies, christians spoke under great excitement, with much vehemence and loud declamation, like our Methodist prophets of the present day. This became so common, that at length, instead of the Truth the person uttered, his gestures and vociferations came to be called the "prophesying." It became indeed a great evil, and was presented as such by the church at Corinth to the apostle Paul, who treats it copiously in the fourteenth chapter of his first letter to that church, and elsewhere. In doing this he sets out with the principle that "he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men for their edification and exhortation and comfort." He takes for granted that they speak because moved inwardly; and that their enthusiasm and truth are divine gifts; but he warns them that all the gifts of God may be abused, and that it is one thing to utter what of love and truth God has put into one's heart, and quite another thing to make a little inward divine love and truth an excuse for an outward thunderstorm of nonsense and noise. Oh that the prophets of the church might see, as Paul saw, this possible mixture of the divine and human, the true and false, the inspired and the uninspired, in all or any act of the Christian's life! How much false theology would it save; what hurtful ranting, what absurd utterances, what degrading prophesyings, would it not stifle on our very lips! "God is not the God of confusion," he continues; "but of peace, in all the churches of the saints;" "let the prophets" therefore, i. e., those who feel moved and enlightened, who feel that God has given them truths to preach, — "speak," one after another, "two or three" at a session, "and let the others"* i. e., of course, those of the congregation who are also prophets, or wisely inspired, "judge." Judge! Judge what? Judge a prophet? What a dangerous rule! Yes; "let the others judge." What! judge whether an inspired man spake truly? Yes.

* *Οἱ ἄλλοι*, "other" in English translation.

But what a privilege to give to a congregation of men! Yet this privilege is an inevitable one; it simply results out of the mixture of the divine and the human, the inspired and uninspired, in the Christian prophets. That they would not always *govern themselves*, so as to utter clear inspiration, was the evil which the apostle was endeavouring to rectify. They *had* to be judged, therefore, to be kept true prophets. The congregation was obliged "to try" at every sentence these "spirits whether they were of God," and that, on the touchstone of their own gift of the Spirit. And thus came the whole church to speak all truth unto itself through its prophets. And the prophets by judging others learned to judge themselves, as prophets or preachers now do, and to know that, as the apostle said, "the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets," i. e., that the divine truth *in* a man, must bring forcibly into subjection his explosible, unruly, human falseness.

Now, this is admirably expressed in our text. Let us who have the gift of preaching, preach, not, whatever comes uppermost at the time, considering its sudden appearance as a proof of its divinity, but — according to the analogy of faith, according to the sameness of the divine truth in all inspired hearts; — let us preach that which has been taught by all whom the Holy Ghost has ever inspired and shall commend itself to all whom he ever shall inspire. And this is the apostolic *rule of faith*.

The phrase *Rule of Faith* has been invented to express that which all sects have so earnestly inquired for, namely, a judge, or a lawbook, to decide their differences; — that which every honest inquirer has longed to find, namely, something to determine him what to believe.

Your rule of faith is n't *my* rule of faith, says the Protestant to the Catholic. Nor is your rule of faith *my* rule of faith, says the Unitarian to the Orthodox. One says: God enlightens my reason; *that* teaches me all I wish to know, it is *my* Rule of faith; what seems to me unreasonable that I cannot believe.

Very true, replies his more enlightened neighbour, no man can really believe, what seems to him in the strict

sense of the term unreasonable. But Reason is not a Rule of Faith, it is Faith itself. Reason is the soul reasoning; and the soul reasoning is the soul passing through various steps of faith. Reason cannot be a rule of Faith, for it is itself the soul looking out for a rule of faith. If you have therefore any rule of Faith, it must be your past and present Experience, and you have determined to believe nothing but what you have yourself seen in life or in nature, or what others in whom you have confidence say that *they* have themselves seen in life or in nature. You are therefore, in religious matters, a Deist, simply believing in the world and its natural laws because you see and feel them; and in God, because you think you feel in your soul his existence, goodness, power, and wise providence. [&c.]

Now I have a different Rule of Faith, (continues the speaker.) I believe whatever my priest tells me, whether I have ever seen or heard of it or not, whether I comprehend it or not, indeed whether it is incredible or not. His word is my Rule of Faith. Because he says what the church says, and the church says what the Bible says, and the Bible is what God says, and what God says is true. The word of my priest therefore, or if you please, the opinion of the catholic or whole Church, of which he is the representative to me, is my *rule of Faith*.

Another person, more enlightened than the last, one who has found out that priests may be bad and ignorant as well as other men, will say: No! I cannot take one man's word as my Rule of Faith, for he may err and then I am lost. My rule of Faith is the Fathers, — those great and holy writers of the early ages who put on record the opinions, the faith of the Whole Church, while that was in its purity and freshness of its first love, before it had ceased to shine under the polishing of persecution, and to reflect from its bosom all the now again invisible stars of heaven, before it was corrupted by power and rent by faction, while its prophets saw eye to eye, and its theologians taught one creed. *Tradition*, therefore, stored up in libraries, and silvery with age, — *Tradition*, is my Rule of Faith. Because Tradition says what the

apostles said, and the apostles said what Jesus said, and Jesus was the Word.

Thus speak the Deist, the Catholic, the Puseyite; the Protestant listens and in his turn speaks. The *Word of God* is my Rule of Faith. I mean the Bible. If one priest can err, so can many fathers. If priests differ, so do the writings of the fathers, and that on every subject. There is no such thing as tradition. It is like a mist which hangs thickly over history in the distance, but becomes intangible, invisible as you approach and enter it. The voice of the early christian centuries sounds to us like the roaring of the sea, wherein the dash of separate waves is confounded in the inarticulate murmur of the whole. I read in succession Tertullian, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Athanasius, Gregorius, Chrysostom, — and know not which or what to believe. Their perfect and combined writings — even if we had them — could not make a Rule of Faith. I reject them all; I go behind them all; I listen past them all to voices clearer, more divine than theirs, to Peter and to Paul, Isaiah and Moses. The Bible is my Rule of Faith; and ought to be the Rule of Faith to all Christians.

This, my hearers, is the *protestant* doctrine of the Rule of Faith.

It says to the mere deist, experience will not teach you all of God; he reveals himself only partially in Nature; you cannot by simple searching find him out; there is eternity as well as lifetime, immortality as well as death; supernatural mysteries, as well as natural facts. The latter you can *see*; the former God must *announce* to you. For the latter your own eyes are a sufficient rule of faith; “look up! the heavens declare His glory and the firmament sheweth his handiwork; but for the former you must have a Bible. The light shineth into your darkness indeed, but your darkness comprehendeth it not; the Gospel must bring you life and immortality to light through the word made flesh. You still need therefore my rule of Faith, the Bible.

To the Transcendentalist, it says, — God has not filled your spirit with all wisdom, although you think he has.

Wisdom cryeth at the corners of the streets of His universe, and you must go *out* unto her. You believe all things to be mysteries ; — yes, but there are also facts. By peculiar insight and earnest meditation you may unveil the mysteries, but for the facts you need a revelation. Your Soul is its own rule of faith for those, but you want my Bible for these. It is not enough for you to excogitate sublime theories of Law and Destiny, the beauty and dignity of soul, the progress of history, the eclectic basis of all religions, “identity and eternal causation.” You must have made known to you also the *fact* of prevalent prayer, the fatherhood of a personal God, the facts of incarnation and redemption. It is not enough for thy soul “to become a Tranquillity out of the knowing that all things go well ;” it must also “work out its salvation with fear and trembling,” and “rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with those that weep.” *Your* rule of Faith is your *imagination* : far sighted and well endowed, and winging on strong pinions its unknown way through chaos, — yet human still ; It is God’s voice *within* you. But you need also his voice *without* you, — in the Bible.

To the Catholic, the protestant doctrine of the Rule of Faith opposes, as it does also to the Puseyite, the uselessness, (in the case of those that desire the sincere milk of the word of God, to grow thereby,) of buying it at second hand, diluted and stale, when they have in their own possession and may milk with their own hands the sacred cow that yields it fresh and pure. And the utter impossibility of finding it in what is called Catholic Consent, i. e. *the faith of all Christians always and everywhere*. I repeat what I said before ; if we cannot obtain the testimony of the whole church, or even of any one branch of it in our own day with all the advantages that result from the facility of writing, the rapidity of printing, and the universality of intercourse, (— and Mr. Newman complains in one of the Tracts for the Times, that there are not twenty English Clergymen to be found anywhere together who think or teach alike,) — how can we obtain the testimony of the least which makes according to Romanists and Tractarians, “Catholic Consent ;” namely,

that of the ancient Church? Neither ancient creeds nor ancient councils, nor ancient fathers can afford such testimony. And if Catholic Consent of the first few centuries cannot be arrived at, how must we set about getting the testimony of the whole external church always and everywhere? not to ask how we are to conform to that most impracticable of all demands, — collect the testimony of that scattered, silent, secret, unregarded, unobtrusive, persecuted church of Christ, of the sayings and doings of which alone, the principle of Catholic Consent holds good? For if the Holy Spirit fills all christian hearts with the same truth, then must we open only those in whom he dwells, — to find that universally distributed, same truth.

Thus the protestant doctrine, rejects the voice of the Church catholic or universal, as its rule of Faith.

It rejects also any creed, as its rule of Faith. 1. Because no set of men can fix in *certain* words, with accuracy, the faith of those that delegate them so to do. 2. Because most creeds have been drawn up, by persons self-appointed, not delegated to express the faith of the Church. 3. Because no creed has ever yet commanded the entire belief of every member of the masses who accept it. It is notorious how little unanimity has always existed in the Anglican Church, about the thirty-nine articles, and in the German churches, about the Augsburg Confession, and in the presbyterian Churches about the Westminster Confession, and still more notorious has been the disagreement of Catholics in the various, sometimes contradictory, often obscure, paragraphs of the great creed of the Council of Trent. Even in the cases of the four shorter creeds of earlier days, (known as Origen's Creed, the Nicean Creed, Tertullian's Creed, and that of the Romanists of the sixth century, and called the apostle's creed,) there was every various degree of adhesion and mode of interpretation. (Origen himself in his creed, declares it to be doubtful if the Holy Ghost were a created being or not.) And 4, because, even if these ancient creeds fully expressed the faith of the whole ancient church, upon the points they touch, these points are so few and so indefinitely or generally given, as to leave nearly the whole field of theology uncultivated.

And the Protestant doctrine, after rejecting thus Observation, Imagination, the priest, the confession of any sect, the decrees of any conflicting, heterogeneous, self styled universal council, the fragmentary crudities of any ancient father, and the creeds of all former centuries — as a Rule of Faith, — says, the Bible is the only Rule of Faith; to it the reasoning and feeling soul of man must bow, receiving its assertions as truth, and its precepts as duty. It is the Christian's Rule of Faith and Practice.

Now my dear hearers what will you say if I suggest that our Rule of Faith may be still something different from this? that *while* it is this, it is also something else and more? that while it is the Bible, as the Protestant says, it also includes the rule of faith of the Deist, the Transcendentalist, the Catholic and the Puseyite? and that if we are *mere* protestants we do not get at the whole truth. High above the rest as the protestant stands, there is still a higher position which commands his: wide and profound as are his views, there is still an horizon beyond and including His. I will try to make this clear; and that too, I hope, without wearying your patience.

The fourth question in the series upon the Rule of Faith which Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton gave his class of 1843-4, to answer, was this: "What attributes ought a Rule of Faith to possess?" and the answer was: "Four: Infallibility, Completeness, Perspicuity and Accessibility.

Because if it be not infallible, who can tell where it errs? if it be not complete, who can tell how important that may be which is left out? if it be not perspicuous or plain even to the weakest minds where is the use of having one? and if it be not open to all, how can it be called the rule of Faith of God to mankind.

And the protestant sets himself to prove that *the Bible* is thus 1. Infallible, 2. Complete, 3. Clear, or easy to read, and 4. Accessible or open to all, old and young, rich and poor, priest and worshipper; and therefore is the Rule of Faith to mankind.

The protestant proves 1. that the Bible is infallible, by establishing that it is plenarily inspired: and if you ask him how he proves its plenary inspiration he will reply,

because if it were not plenarily inspired, it would not be infallible, — we would have no Bible ; and because it says so itself.

He proves 2. that the Bible is Complete, by saying that what God does he does thoroughly, and so as to attain his end : if you ask Him what God had for an end, he will reply, God had in view to give a *Complete* rule of Faith ; and it says so itself.

He proves 3. that the Bible is Perspicuous or plainly to be understood, because God is its author and He is the Father of Light, and addresses the Bible to men of all classes, to be a lamp to their feet and a light to their path. That it says the same of itself and that christians know it to be plain by personal experience.

He proves 4. that it is accessible to all, by saying that providence is distributing it ; that the Church recommends it ; and that it recommends itself to all.

In all four, the evidence, as you see, is made to rest first upon an argument and secondly upon quotations.

The argument is in all four, the same ; The Bible is infallible because it ought to be ; it is complete because it ought to be ; it is plain because it ought to be ; it is accessible because it ought to be.

Because it *ought to be* ? *Is it* ? that is the question.

Because it ought to be ? who says it ought to be ? Has God said so ? How can man tell *what* ought to be ? Who is ready to step forth to be God's counsellor and instruct him how to make a world, how to make a Bible, how to convert a soul ? — The world, it may be said ought to be perfectly round ; but is it ? the oceans ought to be narrower ; but will that diminish the bounds which He hath set them ? What would theologians answer if one should prove there were no sandy deserts, no untamable forests, no inaccessible, fiery mountains, no regions of polar ice — because there ought to be none ; because a world would not be complete for man's abode upon the surface of which were such deformities ? — no wild beasts, no tempests, no shoals for ships to strike against ; because there *ought* to be none ? God limits not his invention by man's ideas of necessity.

For a man to say, as many do say, that if the Bible be not infallible, complete, perspicuous and accessible, it is no Rule of Faith, they will have none of it,—is for a man to say, that if you cannot prove the earth to be free from all evils, and habitable in all parts, and safe at all seasons, it is no handiwork of God's, and as for himself he will not live on it.

God's earth is to be lived upon whatever it is ; God's gifts are to be received thankfully for what they are, not for what they ought to be ; God's Bible is such a rule of Faith as He chose to make it for us, not such as learned men chose to imagine that it *ought to be*. God's facts are better than men's hypotheses. If the Bible be *not* wholly infallible, if it be *not* wholly complete, if it be *not* wholly understandable, if it be *not* in everybody's hand — we must still receive it, use it, praise it and be saved by it, — it is man's Rule of Faith and practice. — *It?* Why do I say : *It?* The scriptures are sixty-six books bound up together, written by Holy men of Old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, in many ages and countries ; and unless we keep this in mind we cannot reason upon its nature.

I have said that the protestant's evidence for the attributes of the Rule of Faith lies first upon an argument, and secondly upon Quotations. The Bible says itself, (he affirms) that it is a wholly infallible, a complete, easy and an accessible rule of faith. So it does ; but not in the sense the protestant applies. The Bible as one book never speaks ; the scriptures never speak of themselves as one book. Even when Peter says *all scripture* is given by inspiration of God, — at the time when he penned those words, John's letters, certainly his Apocalypse was not yet written. Texts must be quoted in their proper connection, and if men keep clear of theories their common sense will teach them what that connection is, — e. g. to prove that the Bible as a whole is complete, you are referred to Deut. 4 : 2. “Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you, neither diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandment of the Lord your God” : the words refer solely to Moses' law. You are referred

again to Rev. 22: 18, 19: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life," without a hint of difference to be put between "*this* book," that is the book of Revelations, and *that* book, namely, the bound volume containing it with sixty-five other books. The Quotations to prove that the Bible is quite *perspicuous* are equally vague, — e. g. "The law of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes": David wrote that of parts of the last four books of Moses. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and heart," says Moses; "That is the word of life which we preach," says Paul; "A wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein," says Isaiah; but he is speaking not of the sixty-six books of the Bible, but of the fulfilment of a single prophecy.

In conclusion therefore I observe that the sacred scriptures as a rule of Faith do possess the four attributes above mentioned, but in the following degree and sense.

1. They are infallible, as containing Truth, which of course is infallible; divine truths given for our salvation; truths which if we live in them keep us from error, make *us* infallible. [The application of the term infallible to the book instead of its readers is an instance of the confusion with which scholastic theology employs its words.]

2. The sacred scriptures as a rule of faith are complete not because they might not teach us many more facts, minor principles and applications of them to duty, but because in this bound volume we have *all necessary* doctrine and precept revealed for our salvation and enough facts to make that doctrine and precept dear not only to our eternal conscience, but to our historical faith; — and also complete, because these doctrines and precepts and facts in the different books, mutually confirm, and expound each other.

3. The sacred scriptures as a Rule of Faith are perspicuous, or easily understood, for the same reason that other books are, because they contain comprehensive truths, truths that were meant to be understood and in

proportion to every man's ability to comprehend them. It is idle to try to prove a so called complete clearness, in the face of all the debates and discussions in the church upon the facts and doctrines. The Catholic is right in saying that the Bible is hard to understand; truth is always hard to understand, to a mind not ready to understand it. The Bible is therefore more or less plain, not in itself, but according as men's heads and hearts are more or less clear. And mark here that debates arise upon the *facts* and *doctrines* of the scriptures, because knowledge is needful for those; but seldom or never on the *precepts and doctrines* therein, because a little conscience (and almost every body has that) even without knowledge can comprehend those.

4. The sacred scriptures as a rule of faith are accessible — I know not in what sense, unless in that they are not written for the *initiated*. Not one tenth of mankind has them in hand, or ever had them; no not one hundredth. In nothing can we see more clearly the weakness of the common definition of a rule of faith than in this. If a rule of faith *must* be accessible — then the Bible is a limited Rule of Faith, and the assertion means nothing.

I said that I would endeavour to show that our Rule of Faith must be something more than that of the Protestant. The Protestant calls the Letter of the Scriptures his Rule of Faith; he rejects the Fathers, the priest and his own mental powers. But Paul says in our text: if we prophesy, or utter divine truths to ourselves or others, let it be according to the analogy of faith, i. e. in agreement with the faith which God's spirit works in all believers. To do this we must not only read the scriptures, but also with the Puseyite consult the fathers, and the brethren; listen to the thoughts that ages past have had and that the age now present has upon the words of scripture, and with the Catholic humbly sit at the feet of wiser and better men than we. To do this we must with the transcendentalist draw water from the wells of our own deep spirits, filled as they are with God's spirit, uttering unutterable things; and thus come into the centre of the

analogy of that Faith which binds the spiritual universe together. To do this also, we must with the Deist, be *naturforscher*, naturesearchers, asking of time and space and all visible things and all invisible laws, the *outward* analogy of faith, and turn again and bind it like bracelets of silver and a necklace of pearls upon the celestial beauty of the spiritual Truth as it walks through the words of scripture.

Our Rule of Faith is therefore neither Experience, nor Imagination, nor our teachers, nor tradition, nor the Bible; but all these together; all gifts of one God, to one end; all to be used under the influence of one Spirit, and all enabling us, if we prophesy, to prophesy according to the analogy of Faith.

But this is perhaps too general and indistinct a form of definition; we were led to it by the advancing definitions of the Deist, the Transcendentalist, the Catholic, the Puseyite, and the Protestant. Let our definition be still simpler, more sublime, yet more hearty and humble and refreshing to the soul.

Christian, what is your Rule of Faith? It is the Word of God; is it not? What God says, — *that* rules your faith; does it not? And Christ is the great Word of God to you; is he not? Where do you read this Word of God? 1. In your own heart; he has formed Christ in you the hope of glory, he has written his law on your heart and engraven it in the secret caves of your conscious existence; then your Rule of faith is within you, your thoughts, your feelings, your own inspiration. But where, secondly, do you read this Word of God? 2. In your Bible. Where in it? in which of its books? Certainly in the gospels; there he walks and talks before you and to you. There is your Rule of Faith. And your Christ there without corresponds to your Christ here within; there is an analogy of faith between them, which shall come hereafter to perfection. Think not the gospels teach any thing then, that the Spirit of Christ within you does not teach; and let not your imagination teach any thing which your gospel rule of faith will not certify.

But where, thirdly, do you read Christ? In Chris-

tians; in all who have the same spirit as yourself; the spirit of Jesus; the incarnated Holy Ghost; in David in Paul and Peter and Augustine and Luther and Payson and in the brother that eats from off the same table with you every day. That is your third Rule of Faith. It is not complete; neither are the others; nothing is complete in us or around us; the world is still a making; so are our Rules of Faith; But "God is able to keep you from falling." He gives you a sufficiently clear analogy of faith to see to read your Bible, your brother, and your own conscience by; do this and live; Christ is surely set before you plainly *enough*, his doctrines of grace are uttered distinctly enough to you and in you, and around you; "if an angel from heaven were to teach you some religion essentially distinct from Paul's belief in Christ, — let him be to you accursed;" believe and speak according to the analogy of Faith; not in obedience to the dictation of any one man, or any set of men, modern or ancient, — but according to the light you at present have from God's Spirit within you, from the lives of Christians around you, and especially from the face of Christ shining upon you from the gospels. Responsible to none but God, let us use then the gifts he has given us — each one according to his own — whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the analogy of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; he that teacheth, on teaching; he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. Amen.

August 13th, 1848.

SERMON ON INSPIRATION.

(AS PREACHED DEC. 31, 1848.)

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." — 2 TIM. iii: 16.

It is of the greatest importance, my dear friends, that a teacher be clearly understood by those who receive his instructions, in order that they may pass an intelligent judgment upon them, and accept or reject them with a firm and quiet mind. I think it needful therefore to state with the utmost distinctness again the view, which I tender to your acceptance as the true one, respecting the nature of the Bible; and this I think of much more importance, than that I should be understood by the world at large. At a proper time I shall endeavour to rectify common rumor, which continually babbles of what it knows not, and never grows wiser by correction; but for the present I am content to have you clearly see the various sides of this and every other question, that like free and Christian people you may arrive at and stand upon your own conclusions, whether they coincide with mine or not. I am not responsible to you for what I believe; nor are you responsible to me for what you believe; but we are all bound to help each other forward by the grace of God into all truth. I am a scholar, a learner, seeking the Truth out of all the oracles of God; you profess to be such likewise; we are all members one of another, and a common Father is the teacher of us all. If I at this or any other time forget myself so much as to stand and dictate to you what you ought to believe, — if I make myself an authoritative interpreter of the heavenly Truth, so that from my judg-

ment thereof there shall be no appeal, — I pray you reject and denounce my unchristian and unbrotherly assumption, and stand fast in the liberty with which Christ Jesus maketh his people free. Think for yourselves; judge ye what I say; and the Holy Spirit be your guide.

The question of the inspiration of the Scriptures is one of great moment in the account of theologians. In the forms in which it is commonly stated, however, it appears to be a question of little practical importance. In one age it has been settled in one way, and in another age in another way, and yet the average amount of practical godliness has apparently remained the same. In one country, as for example in Germany, one view has obtained, and in another country, New England for an instance, another view has been the favorite, without the asserted fruits of such difference being very perceptible in the christianity of the people. The traveller in Germany sees everywhere the traces of deep and sterling piety among the churches, where he looks only for the blight of pulpit infidelity; and the traveller in New England remarks the sins of church members and church officers whose orthodoxy is undoubted. The explanation lies in the fact that the question is wholly a theological one, insisted upon by theologians only, and concerns the hearts of honest, industrious, devout private christians very little. I speak of the forms in which the question commonly comes up.

There is a question between the Christian and the Infidel, the old question between the Jew and the Greek: Is the Bible the word of God? This is a practical question, touching all duties, all hopes. As it is settled, so does a man become godly or ungodly, happy or miserable.

But there is a question among theologians: Is the Bible plenarily inspired? and this is a question more scholastic than religious, bearing not so much upon the character of men, as upon the privileges of the clergy.

Both these questions I wish briefly to elucidate, if possible, to-day. From the one you may draw exhortation, comfort, strength; from the other, warning.

I. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The question between the Believer and the Unbeliever

is this : Has the Creator given to his intelligent creatures written instructions how to live so as to please him and be happy, or, — has he left them to find out how themselves ? This is substantially the question though put in many other forms.

The man who believes the world to be everyway a good one in which he dwells, and mankind to be endowed with natural knowledge of good and evil, and with natural powers to choose between them, needs of course no Bible for himself; sees the need of none for other men.

But the man who feels his sinfulness, his ignorance, his weakness, and longs to know the road to the perfect good, and what are his hopes of future felicity, is prepared beforehand for a Bible, and divines the need of it for all.

This is the *a priori* argument for and against a divine revelation of law and heaven, on paper, to mankind. The Infidel says *beforehand*, that it is not probable that the invisible God has caused a visible book to be written for his creatures, because they do not need one. They have his law written in their hearts. He has so made their souls that they have only to think before they act, in order to act aright; they have only to use their eyes and ears in order to know and love and obey God. All the world is their Bible; they need no other manuscript. — But now the Unbeliever must not be too sure that he is right, in judging from his own conscious knowledge and ability, that other mortals need no written law, or that God has not provided them with one.

On the other hand, the Believer says beforehand just the contrary; that it is probable that the good creator has given to his creatures a Law and Gospel written plainly out in characters that he that runs may read, because in his opinion they *do* need one. It is very evident, that the human soul cannot readily decide between right and wrong of itself; that the world is filled with iniquities and woes; that wretched people perish desperately. God certainly is too good to have left his creatures without Light and Love recorded. No virtue can come to perfection in the twilight of nature; but only under the sunlight of revelation. — But again, let not the Believer be too sure, that his

ideas of needfulness have governed the Counsels of the Almighty. It is one thing to invent an ideal world, and another to comprehend the actual one. What ought to be, is not always that which is. He must recollect that for all mankind except the Jews and Christians his argument is on its face worthless. Did not the ancient Greeks and Romans, the Scythians and Syrians, Egyptians and Ethiopians need a Bible? but God gave them none. And do not the majority of the human race at the present day, Indians and Chinese, Africans and Esquimaux need a Bible? And God has given them none.

The Infidel has clearly the better of the argument as it thus stands, for he asks triumphantly: Do you say that it is probable that God would give a Bible to his creatures because they need one? Then why has'nt He done so? The Bible Society exists upon the supposition that not one in forty of all persons living on the earth has ever seen a Bible?

The a priori argument when thus stated, and applied to recorded language called Inspired, is therefore not a good one. It avails only for *this* truth: viz. that there is a light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world; that the Gentiles that have no law are a sufficient law unto themselves; and that the very heavens declare God's glory, and voices issue from the earth to persuade men to obedience and worship. Rightly therefore, so far as this argument can go, to the Infidel all books in which is any truth, all events by which comes any knowledge, all objects of the natural world by which may be perceived any divine law, all pure instincts and happy feelings of the human heart, *together*, make up God's revelation, Bible, (*Biblos*, Book,) to mankind. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures he may consider *before* all books, but they are *as* all books. He may study them more diligently than, but he studies them in connection with, the Meng-tsi, the Vedas, the Koran, and the Dialogues of Plato.

But we are christian believers in the Bible, my friends! and we are not afraid frankly to abandon this argument to the Unbeliever or naturalist; for we ask not, is it *probable* beforehand that the Creator would bestow on us, ignorant

and sinful creatures a plainer law than that written in our hearts and on the outward world, but, — is it not a fact that He has done this? It is plain that He has not given such to the Heathen; but for all that, may he not have vouchsafed it unto *us*? He has not granted wheat and wine to the Greenlanders; nevertheless he has given these to the more favored nations nearer the Equator. Was not the title of Peculiar People justified to the Hebrews by their being entrusted with the plainest oracles of God; and are we not children of the same covenant, and sharers in their promises? The Infidel cannot comprehend how it is that the few millions of Christendom have a monopoly of divine revelation. But can he any better explain to himself or to us, why a few millions of people should enjoy a monopoly of liberty and wealth, modern science and civilization? That all men are born free and equal is the most stupendous falsehood in its practical applications both to the physical and spiritual worlds, ever uttered.

What are the arguments then with which you have satisfied yourselves that this Volume so much revered, so deeply loved, is more to you than other books, and indeed comes down, like the stone which fell to Ephesus from Jupiter, out of heaven? that it is not the fortuitous product of human wits or enthusiastic superstitions, or proverbial philosophy, but was given by inspiration of God for your profitable instruction and correction in righteousness to furnish you unto every good work and make you perfect beings as God is a perfect being?

There seems after all to be but one argument for the divine origin of the sacred scriptures, and it is as comprehensive as it is satisfactory. The Bible is a divine revelation of God's truth and purposes, because it comes to us saying so; and nothing material appears to oppose the truth of its assertion; but on the contrary, miraculous occurrences assert the same. It is a law of the human mind to believe all assertion, against which no contrary evidence is brought. We say Yes, long before we learn to say No. In heaven there is no doubt. No one but a devil would think of crossquestioning an angel. Because Affirmation belongs to God, and the everlasting; and Ne-

gation, to the fall and time. Purity and Charity believe all things. To a man who believes all that he hears, we say: Thou art as simple as a child! thou art not fit for this world; thou belongest to the other world; to the world of fact and faith! The Bible says of itself that it is the word of God, and the good soul believes it. That is all.

And when we say: the Bible says of itself that it is the Word of God, we remember that what we call *one* book, *The book*, is in fact a collection of books and ought always to be spoken of as such, (otherwise the errors of past discussions will be endlessly represented,) written by different, though similar hands; in different ages, though of one dispensation; and for different special purposes, although all pertaining to godliness and therefore profitable for the instruction and correction of mankind. But we say that these various books, (not all of them, indeed, but most of them,) assert in respect to themselves that they are the words of God. Moses declared that the Lord sent him; Samuel, and David and Solomon said that the Lord spake by them; the prophets prefix to all their predictions: Thus saith Jehovah! Christ Jesus spake not his own words but his that sent him; and the apostles professed to be in general governed by the Holy Ghost in instructing and directing the churches. They all professed to be inspired, or *inspired*; that is, moved and taught by the great Spirit and only living God, source of wisdom and author of all truth. We believe their profession, because it is a credible one. Their writings bound together form the Bible; whether any be lacking, whether others be interpolated,—still the Bible; divine because of the divinity that spake by its writers; thus we receive its words and think and act accordingly.

And although the authority of the several books in the collection, rests upon the assertion of the several writers of the several books, each one declaring solemnly that he is himself inspired, whatever the others may be; and although in consequence of this, some one of the books in the collection, as for example the book of Esther, may entirely fail of the authority which the others obtain, because its author is not known, and says nothing of him-

self, and it cannot therefore be determined whether he be inspired or not as a man, and because even the name of God nowhere occurs from the beginning to the end of the book, (which differs indeed in no one particular from what are called profane histories, or uninspired national legends) ; and, thirdly, although from the very nature of the evidence, one book cannot vouch for the inspiration of the author of any other book in the collection unless it first bear evidence or make profession of the inspiration of its own author, and then secondly makes explicit mention by name of the authorship of the other book, (as Peter does of the writings of the Apostle Paul) ; and although, lastly, it is difficult, indeed impossible to define the bounds within which a writer's assertion of his own inspiration shall be applied to the matter or the manner of his text, and still more as to the limit to be assigned to any general statement he may make of other scriptures ; — nevertheless, there is in the whole body of the sacred scriptures, so large and consistent and credible a body of direct testimony given by the sacred writers in their own words and supported by their own deeds, to their own personal and individual inspiration, that in general discourse and to the inexact criticism of devotional emotion they may be said to compose a compact, inspired whole ; as the heavens form themselves in a single dome shape over us by virtue of the number of the stars which shine out together, yet each one separately for itself.

Considering the wearisomeness of always resolving objects into their component parts, and the utility of general terms as symbols and formulæ in rapid thought, we may be excused for commonly speaking of the Bible as one book, all of it written by divinely inspired men, who from the distance at which we regard them, form but one heavenly choir, singing with one voice, one song ; “glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men.” But let not this general view become the premise in a train of reasoning by which the truth shall be shuffled through a series of theological metamorphoses until words take the place of ideas, authority of argument, and the deification of a book of the upright recognition of the

truths which are here and there expressed in its text. Let Moses and David and Jeremiah and John assert and prove, each one for himself, that he writes as an inspired man, and there needs nothing more, but a sincere heart, to believe what they say.

But friends, (the infidel will now say to us,) friends! Did not Confucius and Zoroaster announce their own inspiration? Did not Socrates declare that a divine genius within him gave him his wisdom? Was not Mahomet by his own account a prophet and the oracle of God, instructed by an angel? Did not Milton sing:

“But chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th’ upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know’st. . . .
Sing heavenly muse that on the secret top
Of Oreb or of Sinai didst inspire
That Shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos. . . .”

And why then not bind up the Koran with the gospels, and Paradise Lost with the Song of Songs?

We must therefore prepare to distinguish between the writers of the Old and New Testaments, and the writers of heathen bibles.

It is evident that this cannot be done by saying that the heathen bibles are not inspired scriptures *because they are not in the Canon*, that is, are not bound up with the Hebrew and Christian scriptures; because the precise question is: why ought they not to be?

Neither can it be done by proving from the testimony of the sacred writers that they were inspired and thence inferring that other authors are not; unless while Moses and Isaiah and Paul explicitly declare *themselves* to be inspired, they also as explicitly denounce the pretensions of all *others* to a like inspiration. But this they nowhere do; they put forth no exclusive claims to inspiration, neither do they decide upon the number or declare the names of the inspired, past, present or to come; but only insist upon their own inspiration and the consequent divinity of the truths they uttered, saying: if any, even an angel of God, preach *another gospel*, let him be a cursed

being to you. This in fact, so far as it goes, guaranties the inspiration of any, angel or other being, who shall preach *the same gospel*; as John says: No man can declare that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit, i. e., by inspiration of God.

Be it ever remembered and clearly remarked that the question is not the relative authority of *books*; but of *men*. When we speak of the Bible as a collection of *inspired scriptures*, we mean that the sacred writers were a series of *inspired scribes*. To say that a *book* is inspired, means nothing, or means what is false. Inspired, means possessed of Life, or spirit. To inspire a material body, is to breathe into it a soul; as when God made man of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, he then became a living soul. A book would become an inspired book, were it to receive the gift of an intelligent spirit and could think and speak and act of itself, with affections and will; but not short of that. To call the Bible an inspired book is to confuse language. To call a book an inspired book because an inspired man wrote it, is as inexact as to call a statue an inspired statue because an inspired artist may have carved it. If after the statue has been carved and placed upright on its pedestal a living soul were given to it, so that it should breathe and come down, and take the chisels and the mallet and begin to hew another block into the likeness of its own marble self, — then, we might indeed call it an inspired statue.

So, were the writing of an inspired man to become living letters, capable of transposing themselves into other sentences, to form all needful commentaries upon its own first text, to every reader, answering his doubts, relieving his difficulties, and replying to his questions, with a wisdom of its own and no longer of its author, — then indeed might we call it an inspired book, a book that had a spirit given to it.

But no! As the great Sphynx of Egypt stares coldly at the wondering antiquarian; reveals unmoved and immovable its woman's face and lion's trunk; permits itself to be measured at every angle, and sketched from every

point of view ; may be entered and examined also within through the ever open doors of the temple in its breast ; yet utters never a voice to tell its name or nature ; never moves its eyes to show a sign of life ; never makes the least dumb motion to solve the problem of its truth, nor knows in fact the theories which distract the learned world regarding it ; — so stands the Sacred Volume before the world ; its origin, its nature, its lessons themes of endless discussion and irreconcilable criticism, but itself silent, dead, everlasting, unknowing what is said over it ; unable to deny, affirm, explain, assist or change ; its mighty text preserved from ancient days by the very sands of bigotry that would have covered it up out of sight, and losing by the weathering of many ages merely the polish of its first perfection.

It *may be* a harmless metaphor to say that the Bible is inspired, but it is a misuse of words. It neither speaks, nor acts, nor shows a spirit in any way. It is explained but it never explains itself. It is passive in the hands of expositors, as is the Sphynx of Memphis. He that has the key to the arkite history of primeval times, goes before the statue and reads it aright, but as he speaks to it, the Yes that is returned is the echo of his own previous knowledge.

And he who, having the keys of the kingdom of heaven in his heart, stands before the sacred Scriptures, saying to himself : “ Whoso hath ears to hear let him hear,” and questions then those Scriptures concerning God and Christ and creation and duty and the eternal heavens, hears voices answering truths to all his questions, but those voices are the echo of his own — Inspiration.

The Bible is not inspired. But the men who wrote it were. The men who understand it are. Even our text says not : All Scripture is inspired, but : All Scripture is *given by inspiration*.

Can we distinguish then between the writers of the Old and New Testament books, and the writers of heathen scriptures, by affirming inspiration of those and denying it of these ; or by defining the nature of their

inspiration? What do we understand by the THEOP-NEUSTOS, or *God-breathed*, of our text?

We understand, that all truth is divine, for God made all things and established all truth; or, if not that, is, realizes, and distributes all truth; that human souls are sinful and ignorant and must needs be taught of God; that holy men of old *were* thus taught of God, and wrote down much of what they were taught, in order that those who came after them might be instructed and corrected in righteousness. Upon any theory and by universal acknowledgment the human race needed and still needs instruction. We understand that God by his Holy Spirit has provided it with teachers; spiritual men; in contact with the spiritual world and under spiritual influences, the influence and guidance of God's Spirit and good angels; "Speaking (1 Cor. 2: 13,) of spiritual things in spiritual words." We believe that Moses and the prophets and the apostles were such, because they said that they were such, and spoke as became such, and because feeling ourselves to be spiritual we comprehend and follow their revelations; as they who know a melody already, recognize and follow it when it is played or sung to them.

We believe, in a word, with the Apostle Paul, that neither eye nor ear was meant to take knowledge of the future such as God has arranged it for those that love him; but that God reveals it to the spirit, by the Spirit, even the mysteries of the unseen world and the depths of eternity; that it is not to be expected that the spirit of man shall know of itself the things which God hath hidden in his own counsel from the beginning of the world, and reveals freely as he pleases; that to express these transcendental facts and ideas, even the very words must be suggested by God himself; words that mean nothing to and cannot be received by the natural man, and are sheer foolishness to him, for they must be spiritually received; and that he who is spiritual judgeth and discerneth all of them as they are revealed; entering with awful knowledge into the mind of Jehovah, by having beforehand been inspired with the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2: 9.)

Inspiration judges inspiration, and accepts it by intuition. We believe the sacred writers when they tell us that they are inspired of God, simply because we see that they are. Something within us tells us that their words are divine and true. That something is God's Spirit within us, our own inspiration. The Bible, as a whole, is God's portrait. Any one knows his friend's portrait, if it be a true likeness. We who are God's friends know that the Bible is a correct portrait of God. Any child can tell his father's voice speaking to the other children in another room. We hear our Heavenly Father's Voice speaking in the Scriptures to our brethren the prophets and we know the voice, and love and follow it.

Still the question long ago asked remains unanswered: How are we to distinguish between the voice that speaks to Isaiah and the voice that speaks to Socrates? Is it the same voice? Is the inspiration of the two men the same?

Certainly; if both utter truth; for all truth is divine. If all that Isaiah says be truth, and all that Socrates said be truth, then were they equally inspired of the God of truth, and the voice is the same in both, and the authority is the same in both, and the testimony is the same to both; for it is the voice and authority of the Father which the children recognize.

The question is after all only one of degree,—and yet that makes it as practical as life and death, salvation and damnation. Isaiah may be inspired to fill his pages with many and heavenly truths, and Socrates only to engross with a world of falsehoods and follies, a few and unimportant truths,—the inspired reader will, according to his inspiration, discover the difference and entertain their several scriptures accordingly. But wherever truth is spoken, God speaks, and inspiration calls and inspiration answers, like the thunder rolling between the sulphurous canopy and the trembling earth. If all truth comes from God, then every soul which can perceive and utter truth must be, so far, inspired of God, and our text receives its last and highest, best and fullest meaning: *ALL scripture*

is given by inspiration of God. And the Infidel after all is right ; but like a savage with a watch, he has stumbled on a truth which he knows not how to use. No sentence of truth that was ever penned by living hand, in any age or country of the world, but has been given to mankind by the inspiration of their God, for their instruction and correction in righteousness.

ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God. Many men, many minds, many missions. Many beads on God's rosary and a prayer and a prophecy to each, and nine small ones come in before and after each mighty tenth. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he ordaineth praise, while his seraphim lay burning coals upon the lips of his great prophets. Some are moles and some are eagles ; but the mole's instinct is as divine as the eagle's, though the one is conversant only with clods and the other with kingdoms.

How then do the sacred scriptures differ from other books ? In this ; that the sacred writers were more largely endowed with heavenly wisdom than other men. In their words was more of truth and less of error than in those of other men. Their inspiration was more *immediate*, more *full*, more *exact*, more *complete*.

Observe two things, which qualify all that has been said above and also explain it.

The *methods* of inspiration seem to be numerous ; the fact itself but one. Some are inspired by means of angels, others by visions, some by internal sensations, others in still more recondite and immediate modes, by instant contact and harmony with Deity. Some frequently, others at long intervals. Some with distinctness, others dimly, seeing into heaven as through a glass door, or guaze curtain. Some upon all subjects, others in only one domain of knowledge, or perhaps of duty. Therefore have I said that the inspiration of the sacred writers was more immediate, more full, and more exact, than that of other men. This forms one and the grand distinction between their writings and other scriptures.

But the purposes of Inspiration are as diverse to all appearance as its methods. It is the divine system of

common school education adapted to its end, "that the people of God may become perfect; thoroughly furnished to every good work," through all worlds. One may classify the purposes of God according to one's imperfect estimate of their relative importance. This much is certain, that what becomes the soul is more beautiful than what becomes the body; what saves the soul, more divine than what sustains the body; what God says of himself, more worthy of his voices than what he says of us and our affairs; that the absolute and eternal, is better than the real and temporal. Therefore has God given to his greatest prophets, the utterances of himself and his decrees, and left to lesser prophets the expression of creation and nature. Or, if this be not so,—if we refuse altogether to theorize, (which is far better,) and confine ourselves to the fact,—the inspiration of the sacred writers, imperfect perhaps in all other departments of truth, was more complete than that of other men, *upon religious ground*. They suffered and spoke as seeing him who is invisible. They were informed of what Socrates was not, of the duties of this life and of the hopes of the next. I say *they*; but in so great a series from Ezra to Jesus, to know no grades of inspiration, is to ignore common sense, as well as scripture. And it is saying but poorly what the Christian's heart feels at every fibre, to say, that the divine redeemer stood on the mount of wisdom as high above David as David did above Socrates or Socrates above a child.

But speaking of the sacred writers as a class; how do we know that their inspiration transcended that of other men, and that therefore what we have of their writings, we do well to bind together and value above all other volumes, and call it the Holy Bible. There is but the one answer.

We feel it. Every inspired heart knows it without a reason. It refuses to accept a reason. From the days of Longinus and his panegyric upon "Let there be light and there was light," down,—all candid minds have acknowledged it. The sublimity of description, the simple exactness of story, the purity and wisdom of doctrine, the appeal to grand and original constitutions of our nature,

to first principles and highest generalizations ; above all, the pictures of essential and original and typical holiness in God, and of derivative goodness in regenerated man ; and the stamp upon all this, of the wonderful and miraculous, with no admixture of the trifling, inconsistent and contemptible, — which these writings exhibit from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse, leave no space for Logic to demonstrate that the Bible books were all given by inspiration of God. They form a world of heavenly truth, love and beauty, which of itself reflects itself in the heart that is prepared to receive the image. This reflection is our Faith ; the preparation for it is our Inspiration. Were a heart to be pure and perfect like God, it would be but one spacious mirror in which that world would be as a whole repictured. Such was the heart of Christ. But let there be but a surface however small of personal inspiration, (that “preparation of the heart” which Lydia had,) in the soul of a besotted heathen, and at least some fraction of that scripture world should find an answering image there. But the larger the mirror the more it reflects. The holier the soul the more Bible it has. “To him that has is given ; and from him that has not, is taken away.” The Bible is therefore the Word of God, only to the children of God. It is the law only of the Good, the standard only of the Wise. If the Unbeliever be a bad man you cannot begin to convince him that the scriptures are given by inspiration ; for only “he that doeth the Father’s will can know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” “My sheep” only “hear my voice, and they know it and follow me.” He is not inspired, he cannot recognize or acknowledge inspiration. The Believer is inspired, and sees that the scriptures were given by inspiration of God. This is the practical difference between the two.

I desire, dear friends, to impose upon your reason but one idea in this discourse, and therefore I repeat it many times ; there is but one really practical and important question which can arise respecting the Holy scriptures : Are they the words of God, or are they no better than the words of men ? Will they lead us sooner

and more certainly into truth? Are they able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus? Do they teach us what we most want to know, and what neither Confucius nor Socrates nor Mahomet can tell us about God and ourselves, the present and the hereafter? Does God speak to us through them in a higher, holier, clearer, more terrible, more persuasive manner, than he does through the events of providence, the order of nature, the lips of the living, or the libraries of the departed dead? Do they lift us not only above the sphere of our own lives, but above our fellows so that we are able to overlook, judge and direct them? Can we decide by their help old controversies between earth and heaven; and on heaven's side? Are they in a word good books, the best books in the world, divine books, fountains of living waters, treasuries of the unsearchable riches of Christ, a library in themselves of all that is holy and heavenly?

Then are they surely given by inspiration of God; and the infidel neither knows what he says, nor what he loses, nor what he risks, when he throws them aside as musty parchments of old barbarous times, full of silly fables and incredible stories, of human notions of no authority, and predictions which shall never be fulfilled, turning to modern books for all his instruction, and recognizing no inspiration but his inner reason.

I speak of Infidels and Believers, of Infidelity and Faith; but they are not so much separate classes of men, as different states of the man. In every soul that ever read the scriptures two spirits or tendencies, consciously or unconsciously struggled for the upper hand. The one would regard the scriptures as the products of the wisdom of antiquity in Palestine; the other would regard the scriptures of Palestine as in the highest sense the words of the wisdom of God's Spirit in the hearts of his most favored children. The practical difference is, that the one concludes that modern wisdom is as good as ancient, and American as Judean. The other sees in the light around us only sunbeams slanting from the East. But accordingly as the one or the other feeling gains

ascendency over us, do we affect or neglect the Bible ; and this makes all the difference in life.

Other books have much to say to you, my hearers, about the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice ; their ethics are all æsthetic ; they reason like the Scribes. But the Scriptures have much to say about the *necessity* of virtue and the damnation of the wicked ; their philosophy is fundamental ; they speak with authority. What your mind only suspects concerning the holiness of God, the need of a Saviour, and the coming of a day of Judgment, they fairly assert, and guarantee it with the name of the God of Truth, the Lord of Hosts, the Father of Eternities.

It cannot but strike the reflecting mind, that other books do not bring life and immortality to light, as do the gospels ; there must be a reason for the difference. Who but the apostles have preached Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ ? no like revelation has been made, history through, the world round. If you turn from the Bible as from a human book, you lose the deepest doctrine of Virtue, the severest reproofs of Vice, the most satisfactory correction of conscience, and instructions superior to all others how man is to become righteous before God. You immediately commit yourself to the incoherent mutterings of multitudes around you, and to the uncorrected fancies of your own experience or observation, and can believe henceforth only in the misty horror of an unknown futurity. If your soul is needful for the understanding of the scriptures, the scriptures you will find necessary for the instruction of your soul. There needs both cloud and earth to make thunder.

Forsake the scriptures, and a hundred divergent codes of moral law shall contend for your allegiance ; you will slide from the foundation principles of eternal justice and truth, and end in the stolid pursuit of what is pleasant or expedient as the highest good.

Forsake the scriptures and temptations thickening around you will find you neither armed to resist nor strong to withstand. Your passions will become your scriptures ; yourself, your Christ ; the world, your God.

Neglect the Scriptures, and they shall cease to be intelligible or true to you. Friends who meet more seldom, have less and less to say and feel in common. We live in the world, and must have principles; if they be not divine, they will be human; The worldly ever strives to supplant the heavenly; permit this, and as your need of the Bible increases, your ownership of the Bible will diminish. The worse a man becomes, the less Bible he has, yet the more he needs.

Study the scriptures; learn them by heart, that as men of God, taught of God, knowing and loving God, you may be perfect, as God is perfect, and thoroughly furnished with motives and memories unto all good works.

Study the scriptures, for in them ye have eternal life, and they testify of Jesus Christ. They first prophesy his coming; then they announce and describe his coming; and finally they explain his coming. Painting him to the life they oblige us to love and adore him with grateful hearts, and to obey all his commandments. Indeed Christ is the Holy Scripture. All the prophets speak of him and all the apostles. He is the painting, they are but carvings around the frame. That he was a Jew is explanation enough why inspiration in its highest form was peculiar to Palestine. He concentrates Holy scripture; he epitomizes, comprehends all scripture; is The Word, given by inspiration of God, to make the children of salvation perfect. Will you now know what Inspiration means? speak not of inspired books; behold the inspired Man, the type of every Theopneust, the original and central God-breathed, the word made flesh "Who spake the words of God, but God gave not the spirit unto him by measure." Oh Unbelief! thou lovest not the scriptures but the Scribe; not Moses and the prophets and the apostles, but thy Saviour!

Christ is the type of all the inspired, and filled with divinity, imparts the same spirit to dwell in all who follow him, that they too may be inspired "according to the measure of their several gifts" and be led into all truth. Were the old prophets inspired? did their faces shine? It was because they faced the rising sun. Why were

the books of the heathen sages dark? They lived behind the mountains. There is many a laurelled sage of modern days who sits with his back to the Christus Consolator, but upon his pages fall rays from an unknown and unacknowledged source, even from the glory round the Saviour's head.

If now, dear friends, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are to make Christ known, although we may not be able to apprehend the divine reasons for their limited distribution, yet we may hope that the more widely they are known and the more they are read, the more will light enlighten the Gentiles. The days will doubtless come when the Scriptures, given by inspiration of God to correct, instruct and perfect mankind, shall not only hold more absolute sway over those men's minds who profess to receive them as the only and infallible rule of Faith and practice, but shall cure all the evils of the race. Then shall their holy doctrines make licentiousness hide its head. Then shall its peace-breathing gospel make wars cease. Their oppression, inhumanity, injustice, in all their political, commercial and social forms shall be unable to keep up their power longer against the force of charity and truth; and as the proofs of Jesus' mission in the Holy Scriptures multiply from heart to heart, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

II.

(NOT PREACHED.)

The practical question between the Infidel and the Christian Believer, touching the inspiration of the writers of the Sacred Scriptures, may very properly be followed by a distinct utterance of the theological question, much mooted in the Seminaries, but of very subordinate importance to the church, touching the best way of stating in words a theory of Inspiration.

Those who persist in employing language which means

either nothing, or what is false, by saying that the *books* of the Bible are inspired, or that the Bible is "an inspired book," — naturally fall into great embarrassments and much controversy when they are summoned to say *how*, and *how much*, it is inspired. Commencing with what may be shortly called a complicated false fact, the theories which they construct to account for it are of consequence neither clear nor consistent.

All agree in saying that the Bible *as a Book* and *as a whole* is inspired. *This* they think must be proven at all hazards; even if we have to return to the old ptolemaic astronomy, and to the chronology of Usher; no matter what shall be the consequence to heaven or earth, to science or morals, to liberty or truth, to philosophy or common sense; in spite of all argument and evidence to the contrary; *this* at least must be established. Whatever seems inimical to this first idea, must be forced into alliance with it or reduced to silence by it, under some scholastic theory. For not to prove this, is to let the Word of God slide from under our feet like melting snow; and what is still worse, not to prove this, is to encourage Christian people to consult the Holy Ghost rather than college bred and licensed ministers, when wishing to discover and to practise the truth; to esteem the closet more than the pulpit; and Justice, Mercy and Humility, more than Dogmatic Theology. This would sap the foundations of ministerial influence and lift to a level with his Reverend brethren every pious lecturer and god fearing exhorter in the land.

1. Some construct and endeavour to sustain the theory that every thought and every word, every original letter and point, were dictated to writers of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures by the Holy Ghost; that the writers were mere pens held in God's hand, with which He wrote all that was written; that the Bible has therefore only one author, the Divine Spirit.

But how are we to account for the variety of style? The answer is: Thus; God wrote with different kinds of pens; as one writes English with a quill cut underneath, and Hebrew with a quill cut upon the left side, and Chi-

nese with a chewed stick or paint brush. The souls of John, and Peter and Isaiah and Solomon were such pens of different shape and quality.

But whatever God writes must be true. Is the Bible all true?—To this question this theory has no reply; for it is based upon the *supposition* that all is true. Until that first question is answered, the theory is an intruder; it speaks before its turn comes. For we cannot turn right about and say: Yes; it is all true, because God wrote it all, as that would be begging the question.

But *must* every thing that God writes be true? Has He not the privilege of writing fiction, poetry; of recording the notions of foolish men, the acts and words of bad men? May He not write nonsense sometimes for his little children, and hide his instructions in allegories, until they grow up to understand them?—We do not know. It is possible; it is probable. But we cannot feel certain of a theory based upon a probability; much less excommunicate brethren for not adopting it.

I do not wish here to refute the theory but to expose its position. It is one of those *guesses* which the world has grown used to and passes current like bank bills in virtue of the confidence which it reposes in the name upon its face. It is not truly a theory, i. e., a slowly arrived at conclusion from a careful, unbiassed and intelligent observation of certainly ascertained facts; but a mere hypothesis, a guess, adopted as a fact on account of its convenience, and in the presence of known facts which it refuses to look in the face. “I guess that every word in the Bible is true,” is the best mode of expressing it; and any one can ask: “*Why* do you guess so? What is your guess worth?”

2. Others adopt another hypothesis; make a more moderate guess,—that all the truths of scripture are inspired, but not all the words. That the Divine Spirit suggested all the stories that were to be told, all the songs that were to be written, all the truths that were to be revealed, all the events that were to be foretold, and the order of it all; but left the language in almost if not quite every place to be selected by the mind of the Holy man who wrote.

It may be asked of the adherents of *this* theory again : How do you know ? How do you *begin* to prove that all the thoughts of all the Bible were divinely suggested : that just such and such parts of such and such events and conversations were selected by the Lord God for his servants to record ? How do you know that we have *half what was* written ? Why should we have ? Much of it was preached for the day ; why not much written for the day ? What were the books of Jashur, &c ? And then why not much interpolated and added, if much were left out ? You have no means of deciding any of these questions. It is *all* guess work. It is all the idle and ingenious domino shuffling of clergymen on their study-tables.

This also is no real theory ; it is a mere guess, a convenient hypothesis, like so many in the scientific world, to save the reputation of learned ignorance, and satisfy the longing of the human mind after the absolute and fixed, in a world of doubt and progress and evolution. Would that we were content to *know* only what we can *prove*, and let guesses stand for guesses in all departments of knowledge.

Now the adherents of these two hypotheses, immediately join battle. Those on this side of the arena scoff at those on that for thinking that there are more than one best way of saying a thing, (and of course God would take the best way,) or that there could be any assurance of our getting the divinely revealed ideas unless we had them delivered to us in divinely chosen syllables. The latter retort the scoff at the expense of the credulity of the former which can receive every word of the scriptures as selected from all eternity by infinite wisdom, when the very object of having it thus pure at first, would be frustrated by any change or indistinctness, in successive copies ; and quote Kennicott's 30,000 various readings.

The one side forget that pure metal is rarely found on earth ; man finds it scattered through the useless ore and much alloyed, and with labor and time and skill must get it as he can. Truth falls from heaven like nickel in an aerolite.

The other side forget that even Origen's theory of

inspiration *may* be true ; one cannot *prove* it false ; nor Swedenborg's. The waters of the sky fall pure upon the mountain tops, and then through earthly channels underground gurggle and murmur long and laboriously up to the springs where men and beasts await them ; and they not only come no longer pure but surcharged with every sort of mineral ingredient ; but also — full of those invisible, intangible, inscrutable, electric and magnetic forces which bespeak from all that drink of them attention to the infinite spaces and eternal motion of the extra terrestrial universe. One may well sit by a fountain, and listen with reverence, if not with faith to Swedenborg or Origen.

3. The theory of Origen, reproduced in a somewhat different form in that of Swedenborg is, that every word of Holy Scripture is of God direct, but not in its first and outward sense. That there is a spiritual meaning apart from the literal, which is but its vehicle. The latter may err ; the former is the home of infinite truth.

This theory, so laughed to scorn by theologians, who adopt one or other of those already described, is however entitled to much more consideration *as a theory*, than their own ; for it has a true scientific basis, namely, experiment and alleged fact. It has a place to start from, and appeals to sensible proofs, first in the history of the day, and then in the divinely inspired consciousness of its believers. Emmanuel Swedenborg professed to get his theory from the Lord, by the ministry of angels. Whether he did or not, is to be proven. But *he* at least had a right to dogmatize. When the disciples of Twisten and Gaussen, of Dwight and Henderson receive such a revelation respecting Revelation, as Swedenborg professed to have received, then *their* guesses will become, to themselves at least, theories, and their dogmatism be in part justified.

4. Some limit inspiration to the *religious* truths of the Bible. They say that the Bible was meant to teach us our duties here and our prospects hereafter ; that it was not intended to teach astronomy, geology or general history, and may therefore err in these, but is infallible in those.

This seems to be a very probable supposition from one point of view ; but still it is but a supposition, a guess, an hypothesis. There is no possibility of proving it. It answers more of the conditions of the difficult question, accounts for more of the facts observed, explains better the relation of Hebrew lore to geological science, to the Egyptian monuments, to the ethnological hints which we get from comparative philology and physiology, to the classics and to the history of philosophy, than the more arrogant "theories" before mentioned, — still it lies open to serious objections, even as an hypothesis. So linked in to one another are all things, laws, phenomena, events, purposes, powers, in the divine economy, that partitions are impossible, or permit an illimitable endosmosis. To say that the Scriptures are inspired to teach religion, but not science, are infallible therefore in ethics but not in facts, is to make the confusion of other theories worse confounded, — dislocates the joints of God's creation, introduces an element of truth, that will not coalesce with other elements of truth, and is as if one were so to isolate our sun and its system, as to suppose its movements to have no other end than self-preservation, and not to influence the movements of any other sun or system. The Bible is a fact, it treats of facts, facts among facts. The body of religion is *history* : and its essence lies in the belief, love and obedience of facts. It steps from event to event, like the announcing angel ; — from the creation to the flood, from the birth and death of Christ to the last Judgment.

5. Some make other guesses of extraordinary platitude, spinning vast and glittering webs from their own bowels. They critically distinguish between Inspiration and Illumination, as if they had sat in council upon the patenting of the human soul ; and knew exactly how "public" and how "private" the divine bestowal of Truth to it, should be in the cases of Balaam, Saul, and other "inspired but unilluminated" men. They define Inspiration into classes ; the inspiration of Superintendence, which guarantees against all error in the communication of revealed truth ; the Inspiration of Elevation, the fountain

of bible poetry and the sublime; and the inspiration of Suggestion which imparts new truths. These are harmless ways indeed of stating certain facts, namely, that some parts of the Bible are poetical, and others commonplace, and others miraculously prescient, — but they fall into the general category of *guesses*, which no one man's mind must impose upon another's, as established theories, revealed doctrines, or points of orthodoxy. "They are terms of doubtful convenience, merely for a classification of the phenomena of Inspiration, of the true nature of which we know absolutely nothing. 'Men spake as they were moved:' how they were moved we know not!" — [Dr. Hodge of Princeton to his class of 1844.]

6. Some suppose that the Scriptures are mere human and therefore fallible statements of a supernatural revelation, which came to them in many imperfect ways. That is, e. g., that the Apostles as common men under no special divine influence, took notes of, or wrote from memory afterwards the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and described his actions, as well as they could, but in an imperfect manner, as must needs have been.

This guess leaves out of view many of our Lord's own sayings as the evangelists record them, and also many historical traditions, which need another explanation.

7. Some think to escape a multitude of difficulties by denying Inspiration of all Scripture, but the words of Christ. But his life is so related to the prophecies and his doctrines to the law, and his mission to the book of Genesis, that the understanding rejects so narrow a limitation of the Word of God to man.

All these are hypotheses assumed to relieve the difficulties or express the sentiments of thoughtful Christian people, again and again in the past centuries and in the present. The Bible has been regarded in every variety of lights, and very often one mind has run through in series all these theories, thinking to find rest in one or other, and finding none. There seems to be a foundation of truth for each and all of them; but not one of them is complete, certain, orthodox. Each embraces *some* of the facts to be considered and leaves out of view others; and

that which is most commonly omitted and the omission of which vitiates the view more than any thing else, is, that the Bible is not one book, but many; and that as a book it cannot be inspired, (unless perhaps in a Swedenborgian, and then metaphorical sense,) and that its authors alone can be. The question then assumes the form, — were the sacred writers inspired or not? Were they *all* inspired? Have other men been inspired? Wherein consists their inspiration? What ground does it cover? and how does it relate itself to natural history?

These questions would require a volume to treat as they deserve; and after all, there would remain only *opinion*, *hypothesis*, *probability* as a resultant. Thousands of facts are to be considered, weighed, compared, and some general formula adapted to cover all. Men think a few texts will settle this vast question; that a sentiment, a fearful “What shall we do then, if” —, a vague impression, or a tradition, empowers them to stand censor upon other men’s minds and consciences; as slovenly housewives sweep the awkward litter of a room under the bed, or under the stove, they sweep a thousand facts of nature and history, a thousand calm arguments of candid men into forgetfulness with a stroke of a synodical pen, and condemn to the infamy of an heretical name those who are content to wait for light before they run, and investigate slowly lest they offend by judging rashly.

Every mind must guess what is coming to it; whether rightly or wrongly. Every mind must form its hypotheses. But the folly of feeble minds is to consider a thing proven by a few arguments, a generalization perfect because it takes in all facts in their possession, a doctrine orthodox because they cannot conceive a view still more orthodox.

When Alexander passes judgment* upon Umbreit, and Umbreit again upon Hitzig, for an uncritical interpretation of Isaiah according to a canon of some theory of inspiration invented in an emergency of the dogmatic theology professed by each, he gives the same verdict against

* See his Introduction to Isaiah, pp. 13, 17, 38, &c.

himself; for under pressure of certain theological necessities he has defined inspiration also for himself, and written out its canons to relieve himself. Every man breathes this common air of prepossession. I freely confess, therefore, that I have constructed my theory of Inspiration of a certain shape to suit the shape of facts I wish it to enclose, i. e., all the facts that up to the present date I have collected; not facts pure, but all assertions ranging from possible to certain, which appeal to me for generalization.

Some of these I have derived from tradition, some from science, some from the scriptures themselves, some from the Holy spirit that dwelleth in me as a christian. My hypothesis is that the Books which we call the Bible, were written mostly, if not all, by the children of God, in whom his spirit dwelt, or over whom the Divine spirit exerted especial influence; that they were written, as much else was written or spoken for the use of the church at the time, and since; not all for that time nor all for ours; that they were providentially so written, that is, that they entered into the whole circle of means employed and still employing by the Living *Παν εν Παντι* to found and preserve and complete his church and world; that they were meant to be and are the vehicles or oracles of truth, all kinds of truth, but especially the truth as it is in Jesus; that they were meant to express and do express these truths with sufficient plainness and exactitude for God's purposes in the world; that they were to be and are, open to all who are prepared to read them, i. e., to all elect, inspired people, of every age and sect, and a centre whence, through such inspired people, (christians), divine light and divine love eradiate among mankind; that they were providentially provided as the rule of faith and practice for the christian church of all times and thereby for all the world.—This indeed is hardly an hypothesis, but a bare statement of universally acknowledged facts.

But *the mode* in which the Hebrew and Greek writers were inspired I know not, for I know not how God's intercourse with *my own* spirit goes on. Indeed I should never suspect that a divine spirit *was* influencing mine

had I not been told so; nor *the amount* of their inspiration in time, in fulness of detail, or in accuracy. Christ said that the comforter should lead us into truth, but "should not speak of himself." (John 16: 23.)

It is idle to guess, where so little is given. It is weakness to dogmatize where every thing is so far from proof. Who can prove that the first chapter of Genesis is not all a myth, a poetical exhibition from the classes of nature, of the thought of Creation? on the other hand who can yet honestly say that he is *sure* from other evidence that it will not turn out to be word for word historically, geologically true? You have all the *probability* on the one side from Moses' probity and literality, that it is true; from this you must take the possibilities of ancient quotations, &c. You have on the other side all the *probability* from the present state of Paleontological and dynamical science, that it is to say the most of it, a poem; from this you must subtract the possibilities of new discovery. — It is a balance of argument; the one side or the other preponderating as the breath of each man's combined learning and ignorance is blown into the scale. And yet men swear by the vibrating index as by the throne of God, and excommunicate as an infidel, the man who only claims his right to wait until the oscillations cease. Oh ye of little faith, unable to wait, not knowing that ye are children of the Everlasting and unshakable Truth, like infants clamorous for food before the time, and grasping at that which is given into other mouths! Building up theories like towers of Babel to make yourselves a name, and upon which lightning not light descends, and the end is — a confusion of tongues. Weaving ropes of rotted hypotheses to tie yourselves together into sects and synods, lest in passing up the mer de glace of clerical life, one or another should fall and disappear suddenly into some fathomless crevasse of doubt or ecclesiastical damnation. Theological theorists, a wingless race, that stumble on the dark mountains, and like ants in spring time pluck each other's wings off, lest there should be a prorogation of life.

Were theologians not so often mere children, tied to the apron strings of Tradition and afraid to run alone,

they would both differ more and agree better. As it is they are like foxes tied tail to tail, with a theory between each two, snarling and biting in a forced concord, and setting everywhere the standing corn in the world on fire. And very little foxes, and very small firebrands will serve the enemy's purpose.

They insist upon it that to believe the fact of Inspiration one must believe a certain orthodox explanation of it; one must believe that it happened just as they think it happened; amounts to just what they decree it shall amount to; covers just so much ground as they think it ought to; and must be spoken of in a certain set of phrases nicely worded so as exactly to guard against even the appearance of danger. Like the magician in the old novel of Alphonso and Delinda, they have deposited their fact in a bureau drawer, with an electrical battery attached to the lock.

Now this is preposterous in itself. It is a repetition of that insolent and puerile demand made upon Galileo. For Galileo believed the *Fact* of the rotation of the sun in the heavens, but could not believe in a certain *explanation* of it which had been orthodox for many centuries, and still was in the place where he lived. His inquisitors demanded in the name of Holy Truth and the Eternal God, not, — that he should keep his eyes devoutly open to the wonders of creation and study, adore, love and serve their author; but — that he should measure the height of the skies, and count the steps of the planets, and calculate all relations, by *their* dictation. What could he? He used the powers of his own free spirit.

Then this preposterous demand is manymouthed. One might perhaps attain to the required orthodoxy, could one only find out what it might be. The Fact of Inspiration is one and there is no ambiguity there; its explanations are many. The "theories" differ. And differ because they are the products of different schemes of philosophy and constructed to serve different argumentative purposes. They have not and can not reach the dignity of facts. The Fact is, (and here all agree,) — that "holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the holy spirit." — How

they were moved ; how much ; how often ; how many of them ; and for what specific purposes ; are questions opening a wide field of conjecture and discussion ; affording material for many diverse theories. These questions have never been settled by theologians among themselves. How dare theologians make orthodoxy, nay christianity (as opposed to " Infidelity ") consist in *one particular mode* of settling them.

But this is not the worst. It is not a certain imposed explanation of this plain and universally recognized fact, that is made to be christianity. It is *a certain imposed explanation of an assumed and absurd* PHRASE, that is thus forced upon men's reason and conscience. Not that the Bible " was *given* by inspiration," but that it is itself inspired. No wonder then, that if the former gave rise to many side conjectures, the latter should give rise to controversies as embarrassing as they are bitter, and baseless.

To believe the fact of the revelation of God's will and word in the scriptures, distinguishes the Christian from the Infidel. To explain it in this way rather than in that distinguishes one Christian from another. One may hear so many opinions expressed around him respecting the amount and manner of its tradition, and may give weight to arguments, alleged in support of each, so justly and candidly, that he cannot accept the opinion which seems most probable to him on any other condition, than as being the most probable ; — he is still a christian ; and his life will show it. To call him an infidel is falsehood ; to refuse him fellowship, is tyranny.

There are two modes of treating the whole subject. — We may take up the Bible with the preconceived notion that it is word for word and letter for letter true ; find certain texts speaking of itself ; fix a certain meaning (whether original or traditional) upon those texts ; make them thus describe the nature, origin, object, state and quality of the whole book ; and then subsidize the universe of matter and of mind to sustain them in the description, and us in our belief. This is the common method. It is however the false one, and results in error, perplexity and bigotry.

Or, we may treat the fact of the Bible as we do all other facts; investigate its appearance, nature, relation to other facts, its history, its structure, its assertions, its activity; grouping and arranging all the facts which compose it as a fact, and collating them with all other known facts of human consciousness and of nature; then, conjecturing how all is to be viewed or explained, and being satisfied with that conjecture as our present article of faith. This is the true synthetic or inductive method, rarely pursued because to untrained minds most difficult, to the uninformed impossible, and to those who insist upon perfected knowledge most unsatisfactory.

Förster Buchb.

Lesley, J. Peter

An address to the Suffolk North Association of congregational ministers
With sermons of the rule of faith, the inspiration of the scriptures, and
the church

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